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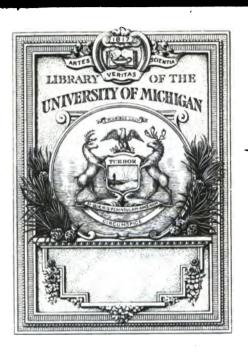
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# CONSTANTIA,

A TRAGEDY.

IN FIVE ACTS;

AND

# VALVILLE;

OR, •

# THE PREJUDICES OF PAST TIMES;

A DRAMA,

IN FIVE ACTS.

BY MRS. A."MTAGGART, of Bristol.

#### London:

M. A. NATTALI, TAVISTOCK-STREET, COVENT-GARDEN.

1824.

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#### Dedication.

THE FOLLOWING

## DRAMATIC PIECES

ARE, WITH PERMISSION,

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

# TO HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER,

BY HER ROYAL HIGHNESS'S

DUTIFUL, GRATEFUL, AND

VERY HUMBLE SERVANT,

ANN M'TAGGART.

. • •

Litrar Itolland 11-23-29 20533

## PREFACE.

THE authoress of these Plays is sensible of their faults; they were written many years ago, solely for amusement, and are now published from a charitable motive, which she trusts will disarm criticism.

The story of the Tragedy is partly taken from that of the Duchess of C——, in the "Adèle and Theodore," by Madame Genlis.

Valville is founded on an anecdote, related by Arnaud, in the tale named Valmiers, as having occurred in the reign of Louis XII. one of the good kings of France, and when the prejudices described existed in their full force.

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# CONSTANTIA.

A Tragedy,

IN FIVE ACTS.

The Story founded on Fact.

## Characters.

DUKE MANFREDI.

FERNANDEZ, Attendants.

COUNT LORENZO.

CARLINI,

JULIAN, his Friend.

COUNT VALDI,

Constantia's Parents.

COUNTESS VALDI.

CONSTANTIA.

LAURA, her Friend.

A CHILD, about Four Years old.

An interval of Five Years occurs between Acts III. and IV.

## CONSTANTIA.

### ACT I. SCENE I.

An Apartment in an old Castle—The Duke reposing on a Sofa—A Lamp on a Table—He appears violently agitated—A loud ringing is heard.—Enter Carlini, who, looking at the Duke, speaks softly.

He slumbers still, yet does some fearful dream

Seem to forbid repose; but this will rouse him.

[Ringing again.

Enter FERNANDEZ.

Fer. Carlini!

Car. Gently, good Fernandez.

DUKE groans.

Fer. It was a dreadful sound—my spirit shrinks!

Car. What, at a single groan?—hadst thou, like me,

Watch'd through a winter's night, heard worse than this;

And momently repeated, hadst thou view'd
The start convulsive, and the stiffening features,
Denoting Horror's triumph o'er the mind,
Thy fear had been most natural.

Fer. See, he smiles!

Car. Aye—but those are not smiles betokening joy;

'Tis as some ravenous beast

Grins when he hugs his prey, and strikes it dead.

Fer. How long has he been thus?

Car. Not many months;

Nor till his frequent sojourn at this castle.

Fer. Now, now, he wakes!

Duke. I will have vengeance, traitress!

Car. Again he slumbers.

Duke. (Starting up.) Morning dawns at last-

My day, thank fate, is come—Fernandez here!

Fer. I speeded on to bring the joyful tidings-

The Duchess is approaching.

Duke. And my child-

Comes she not, also?

Fer. Yes, my Lord.

Duke. I thank thee.

Once more, kind Fate, I pay thee rapturous thanks!

Is Laura in the train of her fond friend?

Fer. The Duchess would not leave her—she alleged

Her solitude might want companionship-

Duke. 'Tis well-away-

[All go out but the DUKE.

Then she expects to live in solitude, -

And it awaits her-all is now prepared-

[A horn sounds.

She comes—my victim comes!—within this breast
What dire sensations rise, urging my soul
To the completion of long settled purpose.

#### Enter CARLINI.

Car. My Lord!

Duke. I know what thou would'st say—begone. [Exit Carlini.

Now must I veil my thoughts perturbed, yet joyful,

Lest by a prying world I be suspected,

And so meet disappointment. [Exit DUKE.

Scene changes to a gloomy Hall—Music—A long Procession of Domestics—Then enter the Duke, leading the Duchess, Laura, and Child, Fernandez, and Carlini.

Duke. Welcome, my love,—to Laura and to all I give kind welcome.

Duchess. Many thanks, my Lord.

Duke. How now!—what mean those wild affrighted looks?

On every side you turn your eager eyes.

Duchess. Methinks the gloomy air of this abode

Saddens the mind.

Duke. You here, my love, behold.

The usage of our ancestors; they accorded

The gorgeous glare, ill suited to reflection;

Pure minds and simple mannets need it not;

Yet now 'tis spread o'er all, confounding all,

Till vice from virtue is no more distinguished.

Lau. My Lord, in solitude we often find
The disposition to abuse a world
That has not been our friend, but driven us out
Perforce to seek retirement.

Duke. Laura, no;-

Who quits the world takes virtue for a guide; Only the vicious fear to dwell alone, And 'tis the proper punishment of vice To live the prey of fear,—how say you, love?

Duchess. I trust I am not qualified to speak
On such a subject.

Duke. Then chase away what thus o'erclouds your brow;

Hah! are those tears I see,—tears, my Constantia!—

Wherefore do they fall? am I not with you? The husband of your choice, and who adores, As it is meet he should, a wife so perfect.

Lau. The sudden change from gaiety and splendour

Has softened spirits, delicate and timid.

Duke. This sounds like an excuse. Presumptuous Laura!

Can my Constantia ever want excuse?

What is to her a prison or a palace?

Duchess. My Lord, a prison said you?

Duke. Why didst thou start because I named a prison?

Deem'st thou this castle one?

Duchess. Alas! my Lord,
I am your wife, obedient and most true—

Duke. Ye Gods!

[Interrupting and stamping.

Lau. What means this transport?

Duchess. O my Lord!

Duke. Now—'tis o'erpast—nay, heed it not,
Constantia.

Restrain your terrors for a husband's safety;—
'Twas but a momentary pang; as if,

Just when you spoke, a serpent's sting had pierced me;—

Believe me well again; and now, my love, I will conduct you through your new abode.

[All go off but FERNANDEZ and CARLINI.

Car. Fernandez!

Fer. Well, what would'st thou say, Carlini?

Thy face is full of meaning.

Car. Didst thou mark?

Fer. Nay, prithee man, speak out.-

Car. The Duke, I mean.

Didst thou observe, Fernandez, the reception He gave his lovely wife?

Fer. I know that starts
Of passion oft afflict him;—he is formed
Of warm materials,—has hot blood that chafes
At trivial causes.

Something had discomposed him.—I perceived A smothered struggle between love and anger; Yet did the former triumph. Ah, who doubts But it must ever conquer in the cause Of bright Constantia, whose transcendant charms And peerless virtues would adorn a throne; Yet, worthy though she be of bliss supreme, I fear she finds it not. The glistening tear Oft trembles in her eye, and from her bosom Deep sighs burst forth, that will not be supprest.

Car. It is the frequent absence of the Duke, Preparing his grand tomb, has caused her grief.

Fer. For what an object was a wife deserted!

It will not change the tenor of his mind,

Dwelling on this receptacle of death,—

This last sad solemn scene of mortal life!
Why left he not the charge of it to others?

Car. He wished it most superb.

Fer. But say, Carlini,

This gloomy castle, is it well adapted
As an abode for great Manfredi's duchess,
Who shone so lately in a brilliant court,
The brightest meteor there? Her husband's pride,
Too strong to be soon sated, held her up
To public admiration, which was given
In boundless measure: how can be resolve

To bury in obscurity a jewel,

Late shown with so much boastful ostentation?

Car. To time we must refer the clearing up Of what now seems mysterious. Fare you well; The duties of my office call me hence.

[Exit CARLINI.

Fer. Alas! how much I fear for thee, Constantia! [Scene closes.

# An Apartment—Enter the Duchess, followed by Laura.

Duchess. Talk not to me of comfort or repose, I cannot taste of either—from this breast Hope has long ta'en her flight—has fled for ever!

Lau. Excuse the interest that pity takes
In a friend's sorrow; and didst thou deem me
Worthy to know the cause, participation
Lightens, 'tis said, the heaviest load of grief.

Duchess. Thou art most worthy, and thou shalt be trusted.

My story may defend thy tender heart

From error such as mine—yet has no crime

Tainted Constantia's bosom—all was weakness.

The idol as the heiress of my parents,

Their fondness knew no bounds, and they consented

To gratify a wish by friendship formed— My mother yielded up her sacred charge Into another's care—the Countess Valdi.

Lau. Oft I have heard high praises of the Countess.

Duchess. We loved as infants, but our riper years

And lengthen'd intercourse produced esteem—
That strongest link in strong affection's chain.
During my stay with this beloved friend
Our moments passed serenely—all was pleasure.
One day the sun with doubly fervid heat
Had ruled the sky, and we had sought what
shade

The deep embowering woods around might yield Till eve's approach, when, as we home returned, Across our path a human form appeared, Startling us both—but soon a gentle voice Stole on our ears to dissipate alarm.

Fair deities he called us of those groves, Beseeching us to fear

Nothing from one who was our votary.

Lau. Who could this be?

Duchess. He urged a moment's stay,

Nor seem'd it much to grant—'twas all he asked;

Yet in that little space thy friend was lost—

His name, he said, on our requesting it,

Must remain undisclosed, till next we met,

And, wherefore, straying in those woods, we found him.

Lau. You met again, no doubt—I'm all impatience.

Duchess. The Count had been at Rome, but now returned,

Entreated leave to introduce to us

A highly valued friend. My conscious soul

Spoke in my blushing cheek—but none observed

The all-revealing tint. Valdi informed us

His friend had sought retirement

From the effects of undeserved misfortune;

But now (the truth revealed) he would appear

With superadded lustre in the world.

But what became of thy Constantia's heart

When the same gentle voice which first disturbed it

In gentler accents still besought its pity,
Talked of soliciting my friends' consent,
And rendering them love's advocates to plead
His cause with me.

Lau. And did he not succeed?

Duchess. Vainly, alas! he talked—e'en at the moment

I had indulg'd hope's flattering delusion,
And bad him not despair—Constantia's hand
Was solemnly devoted to another!
Lured by his princely rank, his gaudy wealth,
My parents gave their daughter to Manfredi.
O dire award!—Manfredi for—but now
My roused remembrance raises dangerous
thoughts—

Into what paths forbidden do they lead me!

My friend assist me—save me from myself—

Tear me from retrospection—be this subject

Never revived between us, as thou lovest me; The woman, wife, and mother, each and all, Require that o'er the past a veil be drawn Impenetrable.

Lau. Have I seen this stranger?

Duchess. No more, my Laura—thou hast heard too much;

I now am doomed another's, to whose wrong
I may not even let my devious thoughts
Stray from their rightful owner.
Methinks I hear the loud and angry voice
Of him I must call Lord. Forgive me, Laura,
The sorrow I have caused thee;—cease thy tears,
Think not all fates are marked like poor Con-

stantia's—

What, though her path be thickly strewed with weeds,

And crossed by thorny briars, through which, perforce,

Wounded and weary she must take her way—Yet does a fairer destiny, I trust,

Await thy steps, sweet maid.—Now,—leave me, Laura.

Lau. I cannot leave you—I've a thousand fears—

Not for myself-allow me to remain.

Duchess. Away, my friend,—what should the wretched fear?

All that can happen, or may be imagined,

Is but a change—and misery like mine

Invokes a change—hope dwells within that word.

END OF ACT I.

## ACT II. SCENE I.

A Gallery .- The DUKE walking in it.

Duke. All goes as I could wish.—Fernandez! [Calls.

Enter FERNANDEZ.

Fer. Here, my good lord.

Duke. Fernandez, I have not
Spoken to thee such welcome to this castle
As my heart tells me thou art worthy of;
For thou hast ever been a faithful follower
To me and to my wife—she also thanks thee—
I will requite thee for thy various service.
Thou hast been careful to procure her pleasures,
During my absence, and I thank thee for it.

Fer. My Lord!-

Duke. I say, I thank thee, honest, kind, Fernandez.

Fer. My lord, I hope I have demean'd myself
As a good servant ought—preferring still
My duty to my ease.

Duke. I do not doubt thee;—
Some duties are most easy—those, for instance,
To youth and beauty paid.

Fer. Most true, my lord,

Beauty, with goodness joined, must ever soften

The lot of servitude, gilding the chain

Oft worn in shame and sorrow—but how sweet,

How proud the boast, to serve Manfredi's

Duchess.

Duke. Aye—the Duchess—so then, good Fernandez,

The beauty of thy lady has engaged

All hearts to pay her homage; and no wonder,—

She gloried in her ample train of followers.

Fer. No loveliness so perfect ever yet

Possess'd a mind more noble—she disdain'd

The homage of a crowd, and sought retirement.

Duke Those who can boast their worshippers

Duke. Those who can boast their worshippers and friends,

What beauty wins must be retained by kindness—So is Manfredi's Duchess fair and kind;

And whom, Fernandez, did she favour most?

Fer. Whom favour most?—

Duke. Repeat not thus my words;

Tis but a trifling question I would ask—
Whether the gay Sebastian, or that lord,
That haughty Don Antonio, best succeeded
To please the fair Constantia—as my friends
Thou know'st they were presented to the Duchess;
Were they not duly noticed—were they not
Caress'd and smiled upon—those friends of mine?
Fear not to speak the truth, honest Fernandez.

Fer. I know no truth that causes fear to speak.
Sebastian and Antonio are withdrawn
Both from the court of Naples.

Duke. How?-indeed!-

Then she has mourn'd the absence of her lovers, 'Tis that has stolen the roses from her cheeks— Her sadness now is well accounted for.

Fer. She rather mourn'd the absence of her lord.

Duke. No—no—thou art mistaken—mourn for me!

What wife e'er sickens at a husband's absence? Yet it is plain some malady has seized her; And it may increase and call for powerful aid; Do thou be ready, therefore, at the instant, Lest it be deemed expedient to procure Assistance e'en from Naples—go, Fernandez, Order the castle to be kept in silence, The Duchess needs repose.

Duke. (alone.) Now for my plot.—
Years have rolled on whilst the dark project lay
Deep hidden in my breast, till ripening time
Now brings it to the birth—few moments more,
And false Constantia will appear unveiled—
Sebastian and Antonio both retired

From the gay court—what can have driven them thence?

It could not be satiety so early.

They scarcely yet have tasted of the cup
Which pleasure, to the brim, fills up for youth.

No common motive can have urged their conduct.

Pauses.

Perhaps their meaning was to blind suspicion; Aye—'twas so—'tis plain—'tis glaring—evident. I know they lov'd Constantia—gloried in it—And, by short absence, hoped to gain belief, From a dull husband, that their ill-starr'd love They had relinquish'd.—She, perhaps, advised it, That, henceforth, more securely, she might sin—Oh—I could tear her!—vile dissembling sex, They seem so pure, and yet at heart how foul Are those whom we call angels. [Exit Duke.

Scene-A large Apartment .- Duchess alone.

Duchess. How silent all around—my trembling heart

Flutters and sinks with direful apprehensions.

Within this dreary solitary mansion

I am shut up, the fierce Manfredi's prey;

Yet wherefore do I fear, this heart is pure—

Why should imaginary fears beset it?

Hence, ye assailers of Constantia's courage.

These gloomy walls retreating into darkness,

These high-arched roofs, where mournful echo dwells,

Uttering responses to my heart-heav'd sighs,—
Constantia hails your horrors;—Patience still
Assists her votary.—Manfredi's brow,
Though arm'd with frowns, meek patience shall
withstand.

Here let me live and linger life away, Whilst, with the steadfast eye of faith, I view Regions beyond the sky—bright smiling realms, Where torturing jealousy can never come, And where repentance ceases, and all ills The soul essays whilst in its mortal prison.

### Enter the DUKE.

Duke. So soon retired to melancholy musing—
Duchess. My lord, I sought repose—
Duke. And solitude,

'Parent of tender thoughts,' as poets sing—
For this, Constantia quits her gay adorers,
The admiring world renounces, and retired,
Like the sweet violet, blooming in the shade,
Lives only for her lord—her lov'd Manfredi—
Do I interpret rightly?—speak, Constantia!

Duchess. My Lord, Heaven knows—

Duke. Aye, and Manfredi knows—why hesitate—

Wars it with your sincerity to answer—
Know you not what a tumult in the mind
Even a momentary doubt may raise?—

Speak quickly then,—and be no thought concealed.

Duchess. That you should doubt, my Lord, is nothing new;

Your doubts are purposed insults, and I bear them,

As ills inflicted by the hand of heaven.

Manfredi, I am both your wife and victim,-

Say wherefore now your malice is awakened?

Duke. Why, why Constantia, art thou thus unkind?

I own I doubt, but 'tis myself, not thee.

Thou art a paragon, and to deserve thee,
Requires more merit than Manfredi boasts.

Who fortune's favourite had by her been blest
With all that birth, and power, and riches yield,
Yet gave them all away for one bright gem,
Deeming it cheaply purchased;—'twas the hope
To make it wholly his, that tempted him
To pay the vast demand; was I deceived?

Nay, answer me, Constantia,—if not wholly,—

O I have dearly bought thee! Duchess. What shall I say?

For as the gentlest breath will fan a flame, Making it fiercer blaze, so may my words; If thou wilt have me speak, frame my reply.

Duke. Then talk to me of love,—soothe me with sounds.

Such as are uttered through the blest abodes, Where, to their harps responsive, forms like thine Breathe forth celestial harmony.

Duchess. My Lord!

Duke. Away with these cold looks,—these chilling tones,—

Thou hast a soul formed for the joys of love,— Thy coldness is assumed to hide thy feelings; Nay, turn not from me thus.

Duchèss. Forbear this mockery.

Duke. It is not mockery, as well thou know'st, And so do others.

Duckess. What would Manfredi mean?

Duke. Thy conscience can inform thee of my meaning;—

Nay, feign not such astonishment,—contrition
Would suit thy features better than surprise.
Within you ebon cabinet are placed
Proofs that will witness in Manfredi's cause;
This key will open it.—I leave thee now,
But shall return again in little space,
And be prepared;—thou shalt thyself decide
What punishment a husband's wrongs demands.

[Exit Dure.

Duchess. You ebon cabinet—containing proofs
That witness against me—so spoke Manfredi.
O let me haste to search his meaning out,—
Suspense is terrible.— [She unlocks the cabinet.

I see not aught beside.—Ye powers of Mercy!
What do I behold? my letter to the Countess,
Written now four years since, upon my marriage.
O well remembered transcript of my soul!
Manfredi's hand, with most envenomed art,

Here are some papers.-

Has copied faithfully the fatal scroll,
Where I depicted all the heartfelt pangs
Of disappointed love; this other paper,
The expected answer which I ne'er received,—
O he has treasured up thus long his vengeance,
That it may fall the heavier. Fate, thy hand
Is lifted for destruction;—even now
I feel, alas! its overwhelming power!

Enter LAURA and Child.

Lau. Ah, wherefore, Madam, do I see you thus?

Good beavens! she hears me not.

Duchess. Hah! Laura!

O my child! my child!

Lau. Whence this disturbance?

Child. What makes you cry so?

Duchess. Dear lovely cherub,

Would that these tears might multiply thy bless-ings.

Who will supply to thee a tender mother?

Release me from her, Laura; take her hence, Quick, e'er my heart-strings break.

Child. Kiss me again.

Lau. My love, desist.

Duchess. Yes, let me clasp her to my throbbing breast;

In such a moment, O how sweet to die!

Lau. Why talk of death. Alas! what can have happened?

Duchess. One fearful thought there is, which sinks too deeply

Into the mother's heart, to let it rest;
For who will rear this bud of op'ning beauty?
And, anxious, watch the early dawn of reason,
Who will mature the springing seeds of virtue?
Thy promises, my ever faithful Laura,
Insure my firm reliance; but a bar
May be opposed to thy kind wish,—and hate,
In stern Manfredi's bosom, be prolong'd,
Till it detest his offspring: yet one hope
I may indulge.

Lau. O speak it, gracious Lady!

Duchess. When I shall be no more, do thou,
my friend,

Repair to Rome, and of my honoured parents
Demand protection for a helpless orphan.
O could departed spirits be allowed
To seek the haunts on earth, once so beloved;
I would not send thee to my father's palace;
Constantia should appear within those walls,
Unveil'd to sight, pleading herself the cause
Of infancy and innocence.

Lau. Dearest Lady,

Why use such language? surely many years May be called yours, as far as we can count On dark futurity.

Duchess. On years to come

Those minds may dwell, who hope for happy
ones;

I turn me from the melancholy prospect.

Which lengthen'd life affords.

Sorrow wounds deep, my Laura; like the stream

That constant runs and undermines the bank, Till fall'n and buried in the flood it lies, Consign'd by slow degrees to sure destruction, Silent, yet sure!

Lau. Alas! what has arisen?

Crossing the gallery I met the Duke;

His eyes beam'd fiercely on me, and his brow

Even more darkly clouded seem'd than usual.

Ah! wherefore was he form'd,—this cruel tyrant!

Duchess. Wherefore, my friend? forbear to tempt high heaven;

Heav'n for wise purposes created all things;
Blessings and curses are, with equal hand,
Dealt o'er the earth,—I may not merit blessings!
Quit me, dear Laura,—leave me to my fate;
Manfredi will return and chide thee from me.

Lau. Madam, he comes—

Duchess. Then we must part, my child;
Good angels guard thee.

[Exeunt Laura and Child. The Duke enters; he walks gloomily about with folded arms, then looks earnestly at the Duchess.] I ask no favour – speak my doom, Manfredi, — I am prepar'd, should it be instant death.

Duke. So false and yet so firm,—'tis wonderful!

So fair and exquisitely formed!—my heart,
When I behold her, staggered in its purpose,
Would fain believe her faultless,—yet such proof.

Duchess. Why dost thou pause? where is thy poinard?—strike!

Duke. Hast thou, Constantia, pondered well on death?

His gloomy habitation,—fear'st thou not?

His cold embrace,—suits it thy youthful warmth?

Duchess. Vainly the bitterness of death is painted

To those who wish not life—pains worse than death

We may endure, yet live—hadst thou been just I had not been unhappy, nor regretted What I gave up for thee.

Duke. Dost thou avow and glory in thy shame?

Duchess. I own and glory in a tender heart—
Call not that shame, Manfredi—e'er I knew
Thee or thy name—this destined bosom felt
The hope and joy that only love bestows—
Yet scarcely had he formed his grateful bonds,
(Alas, that bonds so formed should e'er be broken!)

And scarcely had we breathed the mutual vow When the parental voice sternly dissolved it.

Duke. O that the peace of man should thus depend

On beings formed so frail!—and dost thou dare With such bold confidence avow thy guilt?

In wedding me, the traitress loved another!

Manfredi was imposed on—duped—deceived!

Revenge is all that's left him—

Duchess.

I defy

Thy rage, Manfredi, and invoke thy vengeance.

Duke. Art thou so hardy? can a mother's, heart

So soon be steeled?

Duchess. Hah!

Duke. Art thou prepared

To bid thy child eternally farewell?

Duchess. Heaven reads the anguish of a mother's heart;

Could'st thou but understand it, thou would'st ask

No other vengeance than those pangs that now Rend this distracted bosom at the thoughts Of what thy words import———

Duke. Constantia, hear me—
My bosom is not formed of such soft stuff
As yields to every touch—not adamant
Is harder—nor when once impress'd
Retains the impression longer. Thou hast heard
Thine accusation—thou hast seen the proofs,
Thy letter to the Countess and her answer,
Which speak incontrovertibly against thee;
And self-condemned thou therefore now must
stand.—

One way alone there is, Manfredi's wrongs
One victim shall appease—reveal the name
That causes my disquiet—and—I pardon thee.

Duchess. (with scorn) Dost thou then deem
me formed of soul so base,
To purchase for myself a few short years

To purchase for myself a few short years
Of miserable life, at the fell price
Of innocence betrayed? On me pour out
Thy deadliest rage.

Duke. I will not hear thee further,
A moment pause on what is in thy power,
For life may still be thine, and all life's joys,
So thou wilt point me to my just revenge,
The robber who has stol'n thy love from me.
Seek then thy child and let maternal feelings
Incline thee to be prudent—answer not.
Begone—and do not loiter—in an hour
I shall expect to meet thee here again.

[Scene closes.

END OF ACT IN

#### ACT III. SCENE I.

An Anti-Room—Within, a Bedchamber—The Duchess is sitting at a Table in a Night-Dress.—Enter the Duke; he looks at her, and exclaims, aside,

There sits the enchantress—how serenely calm
She looks who in this agitated breast
Has raised a storm, fierce as when wintry winds
Howl o'er the ocean, and uprear its billows
High foaming to the skies.—Hear me, Constantia,

[She rises and comes forward.]

You have prepared yourself, I see, for rest, And I have brought it.

[Places a vase and glass upon the table.

Duchess. What means Manfredi?

Duke. I mean, my love—nay turn not thus away

With looks where coldness mingles with disdain;
Thou art my love,—would I were thine, Constantia—

Duchess. My lord!-

Duke. I will not hear thee now—too rudely
Thy gentle spirit I assailed, and wish
I had not done so—be the past forgotten;
[Takes her hand.]

Thy pulse is quick, and fever may be feared,
Unless by sleep rendered more temperate.
Foreseeing this, behold I here have brought
What surely will procure that quiet blessing.

[He pours a liquid into the glass.

Duchess. (alarmed) Is it not poison?

Duke. Wrongly you suspect me.

It is in secresy the poisoner works;

Think not I would thus openly destroy thee.

I doubted whether sleep would o'er thy frame,

Without some aid, shed its refreshing balm.

Howe'er it were invok'd, howe'er assisted, By Luxury's soft aid—then fearless drink.

Duchess. I fear not death, Manfredi, but would save

Thy soul the guilt of murder; urge me not To thine own great eternal condemnation.

Duke. Did my hand tremble as I pour'd the draught?

Does my tongue falter, or my cheek turn pale, As I present it to thee?

By heaven, I swear, it is not what thou fear'st,
But meant to gain thee slumber for a time—
When thou awak'st I will return to thee,
And, O Constantia, so thou dost incline
A willing ear to what I shall require
We may be happy—do not hesitate,
Refuse not proffer'd kindness and, in time—
Who knows but I may accompany and a single state.

Who knows but I may conquer my proud spirit.

Duchess. O that thou couldst—I ask of thee

but justice—
Give me the potion—may heaven pardon thee,

As I do, all my wrongs.

[Drinks.

Duke. Thou hast done well. [Exit DUKE.

Duchess. Surely my justly-roused suspicion wrong'd him,

Had murderer ever looks and voice so calm?
I have confided in his protestations,
And, to the event, my soul submissive yields
E'en were it Death, that conqueror of all
The various ills mortality endures;
Forgive me, Heaven, for such a selfish thought—
And, O my child, forgive thy wretched mother,
Who would desert thee in thy helplessness.
'Tis as he said—already o'er my senses
A heaviness, that's not unpleasant, steals,
And I will welcome it as kind suspension
Of all the fears which agitate my mind.

## Scene-A Gallery .- Fernandez sitting.

### Enter the DUKE.

Duke. Fernandez!-rouse thee, man!

Fer. Who calls?-my lord!

Duke. Rouse thee, I say.—I must this instant send

A messenger to Naples.

Fer. So late, my lord!

Duke. No words, but hasten—'tis a suddenseizure

Requires some prompt assistance for the Duchess.

Fer. Alas! my lord!

Duke. Lose not a moment's time.

[Both go out. Scene closes.

## Scene—A large Hall.

## Enter several Domestics.

[A bell tolls.

1st Ser. Who rang that bell?

2d Ser. I know not, but the sound

Awaken'd me-it is the peal of death!

1st Ser. It tolls but on some great and sad event.

3d Ser. Listen—what noise is that?

1st Ser. Some one lamenting.

Enter LAURA and Attendants.

Lau. The dire event, have ye yet heard, my friends?

I cannot speak it-

Att. Alas! our gracious lady
Is no more.

All. How !-heaven forbid!

Lau. 'Tis true!

Alas, it is too true—on the first sound
Of that terrific and ill-omen'd bell,
I hasten'd to the apartment of the Duchess—
Manfredi's voice sternly denied admittance,
Then bade me leave him, for that he alone
Would watch by his Constantia's cold remains;
His heavy groans bore witness to his loss.

Att. Dear madam, be compos'd—

Lau. Refuse me entrance!

What mystery lies couch'd beneath such conduct?

But I will gain admittance—one last look

May I not be permitted, of that friend,

So much beloved, so bitterly lamented:

Return with me, my friends, and aid my prayer.

[All go out. Scene closes.

# Scene—A Bedchamber, faintly lighted.—The Duke is sitting by the Bed.

- Duke. All is prepared, and now to act my part. [Footsteps and voices are heard.
- Lau. (at the door) My lord-my lord, I do entreat admittance.
- Duke. Thou hast thy wish—thou, and the rest with thee—
- Approach—behold the stern behest of heaven.
  - Lau. Ah merciless decree! o'erwhelming stroke!
- Permit one last embrace—one last fond look—

  Duke. Stand off!—'tis sacrilege to look, or
  touch—
- Lo! where from yonder cloud, my seraph wife Looks down upon me—Yes; I will perform All I have promis'd thee most faithfully; No eye but mine—no hand but thy Manfredi's, The last sad duties to the dead shall pay—

And yet—approach in silence—O my brain!—
Behold what once was beauty, cold and wan—
Changed and deformed by death—congealed to
ice

The warm and youthful current of her blood:—

Ah! how support the cruel deprivation?

Lau. May I presume-

Duke. What wouldst thou ask? — speak quickly thy desire.

Lau. It is to watch—to pray—to weep by my lost friend.

Duke. Laura begone—how canst thou weep her loss,

Who little knew her value.—I alone
Can justly prize it—I will watch and pray,
As it befits me—I would give my life,
Could such a forfeiture
Change her from what she is.

Lau. Alas! alas!

And will you not allow a last embrace?

Duke. I know full well how much thou wert attach'd

To my Constantia—on her clay-cold hand Breathe out a last adieu—I will support thee.

[Laura touches the hand and faints—Duke sits by the bed waving his hand for all to leave the room. Scene closes.

Scene—A ruinous Apartment.—The Duchess asleep on a Sofa.

# Enter the DUKE.

Duke. Still the charm holds—thou powerful useful drug

Manfredi is most grateful for thy aid;

She moves—she wakes.—

Duchess. Who's there?

Duke. It is thy husband.

Duchess. Where am I?

Duke. Be compos'd, and thou shalt hear

Why hither thou wert brought.

Duchess. Thy looks appear

Even more dreadful than I've yet beheld them;

Explain thy meaning—let me know the worst.

Duke. Thy death has been proclaim'd through-

Duke. Thy death has been proclaim'd throughout the castle.

Duchess. Hah!

Duke. And beyond this moment thou dost live,

But to thyself and me. Hear me, Constantia, I will relate the truth—deception now

To thee I mean not; whilst thou wert asleep
I hither brought thee, and a waxen image
Laid on thy bed; greater similitude
Was never fashion'd by the plastic art,
A death-like hue is all the difference:
Fernandez next I quick despatch'd for aid,
Then toll'd the solemn signal of destruction,
And with the looks and voice of frantic grief,
Admitted the domestics to behold thee;
Thy Laura I allow'd a last embrace.

Duchess. Good heavens! and could my Laura be deceived?

Duke. Aye, that she was, and touch'd the clay-cold hand

As it had been Constantia's;

I then dismiss'd the ettendent

I then dismiss'd the attendants, and declar'd
It sacrilege to see or touch thee more;
None dared dispute my will—and, in short time
Thy representative, with pompous rites,
Will be enclosed in yonder mausoleum.

Duchess. Hearest thou this, O just and righteous Power!

Duke. Under the mausoleum is prepared
A fit abode for thee; I with these hands
In secrecy prepared it,—hollowed out
A cave for thy reception,—where no light
Will e'er salute thine eyes,—no mortal sound
Disturb the solemn stillness.

Duchess. Am I then doomed t'endure a living death,

Irrevocably doomed?

Duke. No; on thyself depends

Thy future fate; and question well thy heart

Before thy last resolve; will it endure

Revolving years of solitude and darkness,

Nor hope deliverance from aught but death?

Think what a sickliness o'erwhelms the soul

When all but that last hope is fled for ever.

Duchess. No more,—or find some other argument.

What darkness is more dreadful

Than to behold suspicion's scowling brow

Clothed in the frowns inspired by jealous rage;

What saves me from beholding these is welcome.

Duke. Dost thou defy me, then; begone compassion;

Henceforth revenge possess my bosom wholly.

Follow me, traitress.—Hah! thou shrink'st and tremblest.

Duchess. I feel I am a mother.—Ah, Manfredi! The wife, the woman, shrinks not from thy grasp. Inhuman though thou art, let me once more Behold my darling child.

Duke. Thou know'st the terms;

Speak but one word, and in thy circling arms,

Press'd to thy throbbing bosom, shall thy child

Return thy fond caresses. Speak, Constantia,

Duchess. Speak but one word!—yet in one little word

Lies infamy and death. I am to blame

To parley with thee thus, who am thy wife,

The rightful partner of thy rank and power,

And at thy peril do me wrong, Manfredi;

Avengers will arise.

Duke. Hah! dost thou threaten?

Let them approach, thy valorous avengers;
I am prepared to answer each demand;
My lamentations I shall join with theirs;
My tears shall fall as fast, for lost Constantia,
A victim to the grave, ere reach'd her prime.
O I have pondered much too long my plan
To fear discomfiture—thou hast o'erpast.
The time for mercy—



I grant no longer stay. [Seizes her hand.

Duchess. Cowards submit

In silence to their fate—with my loud cries

I will alarm the castle—that shall guide

My faithful followers to my assistance.

Duke. Vain is that hope—for we are far remov'd

From mortal eye or ear.

Duckess. There is an eye now looking down upon us-

There is an ear still open to the voice Of innocence distrest—O Power Almighty! Vouchsafe to aid thy suppliant.

Duke. Foolish woman!

Consuming idly thus thy precious moments;

Vain are thy struggles.

[He seizes her, she resists—Her long and beautiful hair falls over her shoulders—
He quits her hand, gazing on her in silence.

O dangerous sight, my blood impetuous rushes

To my fast throbbing heart and owns her power.

Duchess. Thou doet relent!

Duke. 'Tis Beauty's masterpiece,

And to destroy it were, methinks, a pity-

Behold the form given thee by bounteous Na-

ture- [He leads her to a mirror.

Reflect on the dark fate that now awaits it, Be not a self-destroyer.

Duchess. Barbarous wretch!

Duke. Whilst thus I gaze enraptur'd on thy charms,

Thy brow majestic—thy keen sparkling eyes—

Thy fair luxuriant tresses,

I feel a pang in pity for thy fate,

Which yet delays it for a moment's space.

Duchess. O that this form should e'er have gain'd thy love!

Duke. Youth sits triumphant on thy polish'd brow,

Canst thou be satiate yet of youthful joys? Thou art by far more cruel than Manfredi To yield such beauty to a living death,

When with one word thou canst avert thy
doom.

Duchess. Hast thou not offer'd me my child in vain?

I bow submissive to high Heaven's decree,
For thou art but its instrument, Manfredi;
Thy purpos'd deeds of vengeance all were vain,
Did heaven not permit thee to succeed.
Resistance nought avails me—lead the way.

[Scene closes.

END OF ACT III.

# ACT IV. SCENE I.

The Mausoleum in the Wood.—Enter the Duke and a long Procession in Mourning Habits—
They walk round it, to solemn Music—A
Basket of Flowers is given to the Duke—The
Procession goes off—The Duke remains—He
stands before the Door of the Tomb strewing the Flowers.

- Duke. Lo! thus I strew around thy dark
- What most resembles thee, thou wretched woman!
- The purple nightshade and the crimson foxglove,
- Both poisonous, yet beauteous in appearance;

The oft mistaken hemlock, and next hellebore,
Whose blackness is an emblem of my fate:
These blooming roses, thickly set with thorns,
Offer just portraits of false woman kind—
Here shall I watch the withering of these
flowers.

Gaining belief for melancholy musing,

Whilst my whole soul is fill'd with rage and hate,

Which time has not had power to subdue.

[He leans on the tomb.

Whence this intrusion?

# Enter FERNANDEZ.

Fer. I bring, my Lord,

A letter from your kinsman, Count Lozenzo.

Duke. Begone—begone—wherefore, at such a moment,

Distarb my sadness?—yet, give me the letter.

[Tears it open.

"He soon shall see me"-comes he as a spy,

To see how long I may survive my loss?

Came he from pity, that had brought him sooner.

Fer. Surely, my Lord, you wrong your noble kinsman.

Duke. Ten years have past, and I have not beheld him,

Nor came he to my nuptials—some excuse
Of indispensable engagement gave,
Which long since I've forgot—why comes he now,
Just at this instant?—go, Fernandez, hasten,
And with your mourning train regain the castle,
Detain Lorenzo there—my sorrows brook not

His prving observation.

[Exit FERNANDEZ.

Duke. (alone) I have not yet deposited the food—

This morning it was due—Hah! what is this?

This sickness of the heart—it overpowers me—

My brain seems melting, as on fire.—Help—

help—
•

My limbs have lost their power—I can no [Faints. more

Enter Count LORENZO and his Friend JULIAN. Jul. Was it not groans I heard? Lor. What's here?—the Duke!—alas it is. Help me to raise him, Julian-life as yet Is not extinct—though feebly beats his pulse;— Assistance may restore him—to the castle, Which is not distant far, we can convey him.

[Exeunt, bearing the DUKE.

Scene closes, and changes to a Hall in the Castle.—Enter the Mourning Attendants, with FERNANDEZ and CARLINI, who dismiss the rest.

Car. Our duty is perform'd - this yearly rite.

Paid at the tomb where rests our honour'd lady,

Gives to the mind a painful satisfaction, A mix'd sensation; we regret her loss, Yet feel assured her happiness is perfect.

Fer. This is the fifth return of that sad day
Which snatch'd the brightest jewel from the
earth;

Surely our master will not long remain

A mourner in this world of one so lov'd—

The languid form, the pale and hollow cheek,

Denote short termination of his days.

Enter the Count and Julian, supporting the Duke—Assistance is given him—He revives a little, and is carried to his Apartment.—Remain only the Count and Julian.

Jul. This is a mournful welcome.

Lor. It is congenial to my frame of mind, Which ever shrinks from joy's festivities; I can join tear with tear, and sigh with sigh, But cannot to my face call up those smiles Betokening what this heart can feel no more.

Enter FERNANDEZ, who kneels and kisses the Count's hand.

Worthy old man!—how hast thou left the Duke?

Fer. He lies compos'd—his speech in part

restor'd:

But motionless his limbs as yet remain.

Lor. Behold, once more return'd to these abodes.

A restless wanderer—yet remembering always
Thee and thy fostering kindness—art thou still
Inclin'd to be my friend? I pray inform me
Of all thou know'st of my unhappy kinsman.
I saw the sad procession led by him,
So ask not if he mourns the Duchess still.

Fer. Ah! who can doubt but he must ever mourn:

His sorrow seems increasing.

[Lorenzo is much affected.

Jul. Spare, my lord,

Spare your full heart—demand not further knowledge. Lor. (to FERNANDEZ) Go on, go on—the heart will be relieved

By change of sorrow; from another's grief

Oft is deriv'd suspension of our own.

Fer. Surely, since mortal man first felt affliction,

No misery has been greater than the Duke's—
Each anniversary of the entombment
Is pass'd in gloomy sadness—all society
He shuns, as if at war with social feelings,
And, in his chamber, broods o'er his misfortune—

His bed he oft disturbs not.

Jul. Said'st thou, friend,

That visitors are never now admitted?

Fer. Such never now presume to interrupt
The silent solitude of these domains.—
Time, that subdues the violence of grief,
Or softens it at least, has, with the Duke,
Brought only an increase. Sometimes I fear—

Lor. What dost thou fear?

Fer. That were he often seen,

The lowering brow, stern voice, and start of
horror,

Would speak the mind a prey to worse than grief.

Lor. What canst thou mean, old man?

Fer. I mean, my lord,

More than I can express—or rather, more

Than ought to be suggested, when surmise

Admits not of full proof.

Lor. Fernandez, mark me—
For worlds I would not tempt thee to betray
Secrets confided to thy faithful keeping;
It was in early youth I knew the Duke,
Before discriminating powers are given;
I thought his manners frigid and uncourteous—
Misfortune is not apt to mend such tempers;
But say, as far as honour may allow,
What are the grounds that lead thee to suspect
The Duke has more upon his mind than grief?
Fer. After his fatal loss, not many months,

One morn, more early than my usual hour,

I sought his chamber, to perform a promise

Made to a neighbouring peasant (much aggrieved)

To represent his hardships to the Duke,
And supplicate some trifling mitigation—
Full well I knew how difficult the task;
But in the cause of poverty and worth,
Who strives not ne'er deserves to find a friend
When he himself may, haply, come to want one.
Entering the room, I found my master's bed
Smooth and unprest, as yesterday had left it—
And nowhere saw the Duke,—but whilst I
stood

Lost in conjecture, and irresolute

To stay or to retire—I heard a noise

Behind the tapestry—I saw it move,

And, to my wondering eyes, the Duke appeared,

As from a secret door.—On seeing me,

He, with his darkest frown, and sternest voice,

Demanded for what purpose I was there?—

Was it to steal upon his privacy—
A spy upon his actions, to betray them?—
Then bade me quit his presence, and for ever—
But the next morning let me understand,
That he would pardon and forget my conduct,
So I no more offended;—from that time,
I have not dar'd to plead the peasant's eause.

Lor. Fernandez, I will be the poor man's friend.—

All thou hast said increases my surprise:

Doubtless some powerful motive keeps him here.

Who would remain 'midst scenes of former joys,

When what bestow'd them is for ever lost?

Jul. Some minds there are, insatiate of their grief,

Who doat upon their woes, and, to the dregs, Drink of the cup that poisons their existence.

Lor. Grief is a solemn passion of the mind, Working to good or evil—in the virtuous, It softens, not corrupts; with others' woes It longs to sympathize—then solaced most

When selfishness gives way to generous pity;—But when it takes possession
Of tempers harsh, irascible, and violent,
It raises whirlwinds, in which those must perish
Who dare encounter them.

Jul. But wherefore live secluded from the world?—

Are not those debtors to it who possess
All that the world can give?—nor is the soul
Less noble when 'tis grateful.
Those who are raised aloft by rank and fortune
Should prove that they deserve such exaltation:
To live unpraised denotes a meagre merit;
Nor should the mind be wanting to itself;
The attempt at cheerfulness but seldom fails.

Fer. Alas! this castle is a solitude
Where cheerfulness, affrighted, dares not enter.

Lor. And was the habitation of Constantia!—
The young—the beautiful—the wise and good—
These high-arched roofs scarce seen but in mid-day,

Where melancholy twilight ever reigns;

Where, through the dark and ivied panes, the
sun

Ne'er flings his vivifying joyful beams—
Was this a meet abode—a proper mansion
For great Manfredi's duchess?—See, my friend,
The green moss gaining on the cold damp walls,
Where are the polish'd marbles, gilded fret work,
The velvet draperies, the chair of state,
Where all the decorations of a palace,
Worthy the ducal owner?—'tis a prison
In all its outward semblance.

Enter Carlini and a Messenger.

Car. My Lord, this messenger has just arrived.

To say, the noble parents of the Duchess Journey this way to Rome, and would not pass, Unvisited, the castle of Manfredi.

Lor. (disturbed) O! with what various woes does Fate oppress me!

Jul. Compose yourself.

Lor. I will inform the Duke.

Carlini, see this man be kindly treated.

Fernandez, follow me.

Exit LORENZO and FERNANDEZ.

Jul. Canst thou inform me, friend, of the Duke's daughter?

Mess. She will be here to-morrow.

Jul. 'Tis well; retire,

And take thy needful nourishment and rest.

[Exit CARLINI and Messenger.

Alas, Lorenzo, how I tremble for thee!

Ill wilt thou bear the approaching interviews;

The Duke, now stricken nearly to the grave,

E'en though thou lov'st him not, must touch thy heart,—

What then the sight of thy Constantia's parents,

And of that image of her lovely self,

Her young and beauteous daughter;—long, too long,

Has bitter grief held thee in iron bondage,

And 'tis my fear that death is all thy hope,

To set thee free from what is worse than death.

[Exit Julian.

Scene—The Duke's Chamber—He is lying, supported by Pillows—Attendants near.—
Enter Fernandez, who dismisses them.

Duke. Who's there?—Fernandez.—Where is Lorenzo?

Fer. He only waits your orders for admittance.

Duke. Admit him presently—I wish to see him;

In this my wretched state he may be useful. Can I be certain of his friendly aid?

Fer. Most certainly; for your sad state he feels

Commiseration. He is greatly alter'd Since I beheld him, in the bloom of youth: His noble generous heart is still the same. Duke. " Noble and generous;"—thou lov'st to praise him;

But wherefore comes he not?

Fer. My Lord, he's here-

[Exit FERNANDEZ.

### Enter LORENZO.

Duke. Approach, young man; I knew of thy arrival,

But wanted speech at first to bid thee welcome. Whom dost thou mourn, Lorenzo? Thou art

clothed

In the dark garb of sorrow, and thine eyes Seem ready to o'erflow—griev'st thou for me?

Ler. I grieve to see your melancholy state; But you may be restored to ease and health. My sable garb is worn for such a loss

As, under heaven, can never be replaced.

Duke. Thou may'st find others to supply thy loss,

My sorrow is without or end or cure,—
Time only adds a keenness to the edge
That wounds my peace—not e'en revenge consoles me:—

And this sad helpless state in which thou see'st

Must mar the only privilege I boast— Tormenting my tormentor!

Lor. O, my lord,

Are such the thoughts that occupy your mind

At such an awful juncture? Cast them from you;—

Forgiveness of our injuries still yields By far the noblest triumph.

Duke. Young man, such wrongs as I have long sustained

Can never yet have been thy lot, or else

Thou had'st not thought a moment, much less
said

Forgiveness could be possible—now leave me.—

My weaken'd spirits fail,—why dost thou linger ?

Lor. I must impart news that may discompose you:

The parents of the Duchess and your daughter, Journeying to Rome—

Duke. (alarmed) How! what! they come not here.

Lor. They come to-morrow-

Duke. Oh, cursed, cursed chance—I will not see them.—

Why do they come?—they cannot see their daughter!

Long since their mourning for her must have ceas'd.—

Few have Manfredi's cause for wretchedness—Begone, Lorenzo,—leave me to myself.—
What Fate awards, Manfredi must abide.
And sleep may renovate my strength and spirits
T' endure th' approaching interview.—
When morning dawns, I do entreat thy presence.

To thy sole car, and trusting in thy prudence, I will disclose the cause of my disquiet.

Scene closes.

END OF ACT IV.

#### ACT V. SCENE I.

The Wood near the Mausoleum.—Enter Lo-Benzo and Julian.

- Jul. The sun has broken through you gilded clouds—
- Lor. Glorious orb!—thou wilt pursue thy course,

E'en to the end of time, with wonted splendour, Yet never will be lightened by thy beams

One more a prey to sorrow than Lorenzo.

Behold again the stately monument,

Raised to the memory of my Constantia.—

I oft have told thee of her early fate;

Blooming in youth and beauty she was doomed

To inhabit the dark tenement of age.

Ah! what availed to save from death's cold grasp
The eyes of heaven's bright tint—the coral lips,
Whence issued sounds of harmony and sense;
The roseate cheek, the fair-proportioned form!
Triumphant over these the spoiler came,
And robbed the world of its most precious gem!

Jul. My lord, beware; indulge not thus your grief;

Some passers by may hear and raise suspicion.

Lor. Bear with me yet awhile; thy friendly
ear

Has often listened to my fond complaints;
Thou didst not know Constantia, and may think
My warm eulogiums flow from partial love.
O ne'er could mortal praise match her desert!
This sacred spot my soul so longed to visit
I feel already it was wrong to seek.—
Do thou observe that none approach too nearly,
I will but breathe one prayer to my Constantia.

[He kneels before the tomb.

Deign, sainted spirit of my only love,

If Heaven permit, to listen to his voice
Who now thy tomb with reverence approaches.
Years have passed over me, yet Time, that
draws

O'er the disastrous past Oblivion's veil,
Brings not to me forgetfulness.—Ah still
Dwell the soft accents on mine ear, when she,
With modest grace, forbade me to despair;—
O fairest morning of the foulest day,
That in the blackest night didst terminate!
Henceforth, in dreary darkness I must make
My painful pilgrimage.—O power supreme!
Shorten my weary way.

[Rises and comes forward.

Jul. 'Tis said the Duke Is fast recovering.

Lor. Yes; last night I found him
Restor'd to speech, but still his limbs refuse
Their wonted motion—something on his mind
Seems to depress him with a torturing weight.

Jul. The news of the approaching guests how bore he?

Lor. As one who, careless straying, unawares
Treads on the poisonous adder:
With all the power his fell disease allow'd,
He started and exclaim'd—O cursed chance!
Then sunk in gloomy silence—when I left him
He said he wished to see me in the morning—
Hinting he had some secret to disclose.

Jul. Something, perhaps, respecting the inheritance

Which falls to you of all his wide domains.

Lor. If it be so, why hesitate to speak?

O what is worldly wealth to souls like mine?

So single—so forlorn—I prize it not;

The being for whose sake I could have wish'd it Is placed, and happily, beyond its influence;

All I now ask, that riches can bestow

Is to yield worth in poverty kind succour,

And gain by that an angel's approbation

When we shall meet hereafter.—O, my friend, No act, no word, no thought, of thy Lorenzo, But bears a reference to my Constantia. Now I may call her mine.

Jul. Let us return,

The Duke may be impatient.

Lor. Would this interview

Were over, Julian—I dread to think of it—
Whate'er it be he wishes to impart,

He seems to shrink from—restless and alarm'd,

At every sound he starts,—his eager eyes

Cast jealous glances on surrounding objects;

He hopes for my assistance—may it be

Demanded in an honourable cause!

[They go out. Scene closes.

The Duke's Apartment.—Fernandez placing the Pillows, &c.

Duke. Away !--away !

Fer. I sought to give you ease.

Duke. What dost thou talk of?—thou canst never give

What I can never feel, for thou art ignorant.

Of any medicine may be administered.

To such disease as miné.

#### Enter Count LORENZO.

Fer. My Lord, the Count.

Duke. 'Tis well—retire, and see that none disturb us. [Exit Fernandez.

Where hast thou been, Lorenzo?—nay, reply not,

Here be thy actions free;—say, am I wrong In hoping thou wilt grant me kind assistance?

Lor. Of that, my Lord, you may be well assur'd.

Duke. And thou may'st be assur'd I would not ask it,

Could I assist myself;—in vain I try
My utmost efforts—Fate enchains my limbs—

Behold, I have not the least power o'er them— From dire necessity I ask thy aid— Canst thou be faithful to a given promise?

Lor. How needless is that question—speak your wish.

Duke. (speaks with hesitation) Know then,
Lorenzo, prisoner near this castle
I hold a bitter foe—to say the cause
Were wasting time and words—it is an enemy,
Most deadly to my peace of mind and honour,
Whom I have long imprison'd, as was just.
Beneath Constantia's tomb, debarr'd the light
And sound of human voice—with scanty food,
Deliver'd by my hand, my victim lives;
I meant not mercy by a speedy death,
And yesterday the sustenance was due.

Lor. Unhappy wretch!

Duke. Thy pity is an insult—spare it, therefore—

Malicious Fate! to what am I reduced!

Lor. Hasten, my lord, your victim is expiring—

Duke. (with great agitation) Close to my bed-behind the tapestry-There is a door-this key will open it-There you will find the food-pursue your way Down the long vaulted passage-mark me, Some Sugar Synam Some

There is a second door, with iron grating-Within it place the food,—instant return: But as thou hop'st to prosper in this would, And have thy sins forgiven in the next, Strictly obey my orders—thou art not gone— Hast thou not comprehended my instructions?

Lorenzo.

Duke. I had forgotten— Gives the key. Now speed thy way—speak not a word—pass not The grated door-loiter not-Each moment thou art gone will seem an age.

Lor. Most clearly—but the key-----

Exit LORENZO.

Surely he may be trusted—should he speak, His voice would not be known, and proud Constantia.

In sullen silence, still receives her food; Unless I ask, if she has yet repented. O that she would repent-my spirit tires Of such dull vengeance—exquisite it were To find the wretch she nurses in her heart, And make her view his pale and mangled corse. [Scene closes.

Scene changes to a subterraneous Passage, quite dark-Lorenzo is finding his way slowly.

Lor. How shall I find this grating?-

If thou, poor wretch, hast 'scaped thy mortal prison,

(As much my mind forbodes)—the search is useless;-

Two days without subsistence! - Gracious Heaven!-

This sure must be the grating-wretched being!

Debarr'd the light and converse with mankind; What could have been thy crime?

Most injuries are best repaid with scorn,

If pity be too gentle a sensation.

[He opens the door, places the basket, shuts, locks, and gives three strokes on it.

I fain would know if the poor creature lives;
May I not speak?—a groan!—the sufferer lives!
Now Heaven be thank'd, I am not come too late;
Yet if, enfeebled by the want of food,
He cannot reach or understand 'tis near,
'Twere best I spoke—

Whoe'er thou art, confined in this drear cell, Say if I can assist thee?—O, too surely,

[More groans.

He is expiring—aid is come in vain—

Spite of my promise, I must try to soothe

The last sad moments of a fellow-creature,

Who still is such, though blacken'd o'er with
guilt,

[Opens the grating, goes in. Scene closes.

Scene—The Wood near the Tomb.—Enter the Parents of Constantia, her Daughter, her Friend, Laura, and Attendants.

Count. Be comforted, my love, restrain your grief,

Lest I repent me having brought you hither.

Countess. O were it but her death I had to mourn,

That sorrow had, with time, faded away;

But I recal her miseries on earth,

And bitter deep repentance fills my soul.

Count. No more of this, strive to forget the past.

Lau. Believe, to be a scraph wrapt in bliss, Constantia has exchanged her mortal state.

Countess. Alas! I ne'er can drive from my remembrance

That cruel moment when, with meek obedience, She at the altar vow'd to be Manfredi's; The tearful eye, pale cheek, and faltering voice, Spoke more than hashfulness; we should have

We should have understood, without a question, Her filial piety would make her wretched.

Count. Why talkst thou thus, and why believe her wretched?

The envied bride of titles, wealth, and power.

Countess. Ah, what were these, if only these were hers?

The heart asks something more, not to be bought'
By titles, wealth, or power;—from this form
The bloom of youth has pass'd, and hoary age
Its pale successor—yet my heart remains,
As in the tenderness of early days,
Throbbing with artiency of hope and fear;—
Nor you, my Lord, mock at this declaration,
You sympathize with me, I am assured.
Let us approach the tomb—sad solemn scene!
Yet useful to the mind.

Count. O, go not nearer!--

Countess. Came I not hither to behold where rest

The mouldering relics of our lost Constantia?—
Come, my beloved orphan, only pledge
Of one still more belov'd, regard the place
Where rests thy mother from all mortal ills;

[They approach the Tomb.

Bend thy young knees—invoke her sainted spirit.

Unconscious thou art yet of thy sad loss,

Of the dread deprivation Heaven ordain'd

Should be thy infant lot—far heavier, far,

The stern decree was by a parent felt.

Thou canst not want a mother whilst I live;

And, for thy sake, may a protecting power.

Grant me a long existence;—yet, alas!

When ripening years have fully formed thy features,

Thou wilt still more resemble my Constantia, And cause me deeper sorrow.

Lau. Rather think
That in her child, Constantia is restored;—

Sweet girl, be perfect as thy mother was,
Possess her virtues—but escape her woes.

Count. Yonder I see, advancing towards the tomb,

A group of people, bearing, in their arms, Some helpless being.

Lau. Heavens!—it is the Duke,
Why comes he here to interrupt our grief?
Countess. What noise is that?—

[A noise is heard of unbarring and unbolting; the Duke is brought in a chair to the front of the Stage; as he comes near the Tomb, the door of it opens, and Lorenzo appears, supporting Constantia.—All start.

Duke. (to LORENZO) Traitorous wretch!—
too just were my suspicions!—

Lor. Inhuman monster!—

Duchess. (looking alternately at her Husband, Lover, Parents, and Child, falls into her Mother's arms)

O save me from him—save me from them both!

In thy arms, mother, let me refuge find, Alike from love and fear!

Count. What horrid villany!-

Duke. Spare thy bitter words—reproaches now, Just or unjust, I equally defy;

Revenge eludes my grasp—all is discover'd.

Duchess. O say not that I told thee—witness for me

Bright orb of Heaven! by my sad eyes unseen For years and years, to what amount I know not; And thou, Almighty Power, who hast permitted The evils I have proved, to thee I bend In gratitude—thou didst vouchsafe the courage Which steel'd my soul to bear my bitter wrongs, So that the only sufferer was myself.—

Lorenzo is not murdered yet—O save him!

Lor. (throwing himself at the feet of the Duchess)

Adorable Constantia!—matchless woman!— Lorenzo lives, to be thy wrong's avenger.

Duke. Heard I aright?—and is it now reveal'd,

Now, when too late,—too late,—O, torture!

Count. What dost thou mutter, execrable wretch?

Duke. Upon the grave's brink is no time to parley—

Yet bitter disappointment, rage, and shame, Hasten not death,—his coming is too slow For my impatience: this shall set me free.

[Stabs himself.

Count. What horrid desperation!—O declare, Say, wherefore hast thou thus confined my daughter?

Lor. Speak, monster;—e'er thy trembling soul goes forth.

To meet its doom,

Duke. I feel, in these last moments of my life, Compunction's bitter pangs—O pardon me, And pity me, my innocent Constantia!

My child too—would I durst invoke

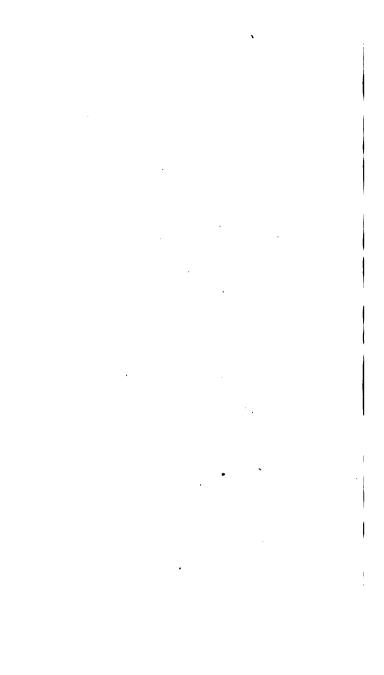
Heaven's blessings on thee—but in vain I strive,

Death, cold death, is stronger—Oh. [Dies.

Lor. (to CONSTANTIA) Belov'd—rever'd—restored me from the grave.

Countess. Forbear, my Lord — sacred her sorrows are,

With pious awe lament the dead,
Whose crimes be buried with him—
The mind which grief so long has held opprest,
Yields not at once to joy—
"Tis only piety and time
Bring healing on their wings for heavy evils.



# VALVILLE;

OR,

#### THE PREJUDICES OF PAST TIMES.

A Drama,

IN FIVE ACTS.

Taken from a French Anecdote, in the Reign of Louis XII. related by Arnaud.

## Characters.

THE KING.

LIANCOURT.

VALVILLE.

BALDWIN, an old Domestic.

COUNT.

ADELAIDE.

LEONORA BEAUMONT.

CLAUDINE, her Attendant.

COUNTESS.

# VALVILLE;

OR,

## THE PREJUDICES OF PAST TIMES.

#### ACT I. SCENE I.

An Apartment in Liancourt's House—Enter Liancourt followed by Baldwin.

Lian. I'll hear no more-

Bald. Is then your heart insensible to pity.

Lian. Bold and presumptuous! does it suit thy station

Thus to remonstrate-

Bald. I dare be bold, sir, in the sufferer's cause,

Yet know too well how infinite the distance
That fate has placed between the lord and vassal;
Could I forget, you often would remind me—

[LIANCOURT frowns.

O pardon, sir, your poor, old, helpless servant. See these gray hairs—past are my better days. Worn out in your late noble father's service, Who, as a parent rather than a master, Ruled o'er his happy household.

Yet low as is my state, 'tis with reluctance I eat that bread I can no longer earn.

For me—my stay on earth will not be long—O suffer me to close my eyes in peace;

Let them not see foul discontent usurp Dominion over pity in your bosom.

Think of your dying father's last request,'

And can you then retain your hate to Valville?

Lian. Name him no more—I hate his very

You know this well, and therefore make your choice

Whose fortunes you will follow-his or mine.

Bald. Alas for me!—must such a choice be made?

Why cannot I, as in past happy times, Honour and serve you both?

Lian. No, you cannot—
What! shall he interfere in my sole property?
Must I be censured by a prying world
Or give up half my fortune? No,
I will assert my right—a just revenge
For slighted faith and violated vows.
What! must I gild a hated rival's triumph?
Shall Leonora by my aid be tempted
To give to Valville what she promised me,
A hand and heart that had ere now been mine
But for his interference?

Bald. And shall the inconstant lightness of a woman

Be charged a crime to Valville?

Lian. Silence, old prating dotard—for I tell thee

I owe the loss of Leonora's heart

Not to caprice, but to the wily arts

Of this, your specious favourite,—and I swear

Not to desist till I am well avenged.

I grant my father knew not of our loves;

He, therefore, formed a different plan for each,

Demanded for his Valville Leonora,

And the insipid Adelaide for me.

Their fortunes both are great—their births are noble,

Both, too, are young, and followed for their beauty,

Yet in their characters—how great the difference! The sparkling fire of Leonora's eyes

Bespeaks the impassioned soul that fills her bosom,

Proud and disdainful, yet adorable;

And, though capricious, charming!

Valville can never love her as I love her!

Nor can he be the object of her love,

Of that attachment—passionate and glowing— Which once she owned for me.

Bald. Yet you have told me

This her regard for you was a strict secret—
Why censure Valville?

Lian. (not attending to him) Exquisite revenge!

To see them wedded—to behold him form
Those ties which render up the precious trust
Of peace and honour to a woman's keeping—
And then reviving in her fickle bosom
That flame which is not—cannot be extinguish'd,
Rob him of both.

Bald. O, by the memory of your noble father,
And as you value, at the hour of death,
That peace which then, indeed, is precious to
us—

Lian. (interrupting) Fool, cease your excalmations—for the deed

That frights your coward soul is render'd needless: But I have gain'd

Revenge by other means—and Leonora

To Valville now can never be united.

Bald. Alas! what have you done?

Lian. Why, I have rent the veil—I have divulg'd

The fatal secret—and I sent for you

To carry him a message—meant in kindness,
Though you may chuse to title it severe;
Once more I will repeat it—you may tell him,
That when he quits this kingdom for some other,
I will provide his needful sustenance;
Here 'tis impossible he should remain—
Last night decided every thing; go then—
It will be charity to visit him.
Begone—and, when you next appear before me,
Abridge those ceremonies of your grief;
No more uplifted hands and streaming eyes—
I charge you.

Scene closes.

Scene II.—Leonora's Apartment—She is sitting in a melancholy Attitude, attended by CLAUDINE.

Leon. Could it, indeed, be Valville,
Who, here this morning, stood before my eyes?
A gloomy horror sat upon his brow!
His heart seem'd struggling with some strong emotion;

- Surely, it was the impetuous Liancourt— Haughty, and fierce, and headstrong in his passions;—
- Say, dost thou think, Claudine, it could be Valville?
  - Clau. He seem'd indeed quite chang'd and lost in grief.
  - Leon. I own I have not used these brothers well:
- Spite of my pride I own it—when by death Kindly released from a detested husband,

The vows of Liancourt soon reach'd my heart,
Vows breath'd and listen'd to in secrecy,
(Ear decency imposed a short concealment);
Meanwhile the father of this secret lover
Design'd to wed me to his other son,
Whom at that time I never had beheld;
But when (my mourning ended) Valville came—
He came and prov'd victorious o'er his brother.

Class Did not the impetuous Liancourt re-

This alienation of his prior right?

ď

Leon; Yes; he was furious—but he had no remedy;

My; guardian prudence ever stood my friend,
And still withheld each token of affection.

That might appear as proof that he was lov'd;
Nor witness ever was there to our vows;
His fury then was vain—and only serv'd.

To make me better like his gentler brother:
Valville's seducing softness pleas'd the more,
Oppos'd to Liancourt's unruly passions.

Clau. But, why are then the joyful rites delay'd?

On you depends the day.

Leon. On me does it depend? Alas!

My mind is overwhelm'd with dire forebodings!

Why comes not Adelaide?

Clau. Madam, she's here.

Leon. (To CLAUDINE.) Leave us.

#### Enter ADELAIDE.

Adel. How's this—in tears, my friend!

What can have happen'd?

Leon. How shall I tell you?

Adel. Is Valville well?

Leon: O! he is most inhuman!

Adel. What, Valville?—'tis impossible!

Leon. Nay, you shall judge;

This morning I had reason'd with myself,

And strove with specious arguments to conquer That dread to lose my late acquired freedom, Which, spite of Valville's influence o'er my heart,

Maintain'd an equal combat against Love;
But Love has conquer'd—and no more shall
Valville

Accuse me justly of my fickleness;—
And wherefore hesitate to make him happy?
Has not the world, the criticising world,
With its applauses, sanctified the choice
My heart has made?—and have I more to wish?
Let private praise charm unambitious minds,
I court the approving multitude—and hope,
Envied and prais'd, to be the wife of Valville;
Nor, but with such a hope, would I be his;—
These are, you know, my inmost sentiments,
Which you have often combated with warmth;
Spite of that softness—that angelic softness—
Which Valville says presides o'er all your actions.

Adel. Has he thus said of me?

Leon. O yes he has;—
Being my friend he often praises you,
It is a flattering compliment to me—
Yet I have sometimes, I will own the truth,
A little envied you the winning softness
That Valville likes so well,

Adel. Ah! Leonora!

This is not telling me your present sorrow.

Leon. Excuse my wandering, and now I'll tell you:—

Just at the moment that my mind was fix'd,
My lover stood before me—but, good heavens!
With what a strange disturbance in his looks
He approach'd me—would have spoken—yet, at
first.

Words seem'd denied him:—when he found his voice,

Taking my hand, he said, in solemn accents— Madam, I come but to restore you back Those vows that I was once thought worthy of, And to release you from presumptuous homage Which you, perhaps, are weary of receiving.

Adel. To what could all this tend?

Leon. I would have answer'd,

But he besought me,

For the last time, to hear him out with patience;

He came to take an everlasting leave!

Guess my surprise—all utterance was demed

There was, he said and sigh'd, a fatal secret, Which soon must reach my ears, and would convince me

That an eternal bar was placed between us;
Then kissed the trembling hand he held in his—
Pray'd for my welfare—hoped I would believe
He ever must be grateful—and then left me,
Spite of my utmost efforts to detain him.

Adel. And did he not return?

Leon. Alas? he did not—

But I have sent to him, and wait his answer;

Hard as it is for me to supplicate,

I carnestly besought him to return

To see me once again:—now say, my friend, Have I not cause for sorrow?

Adel. You have, indeed,

And would I could relieve you; but my thoughts

Are lost in wild conjectures—young, rich, and
noble,

Respected and belov'd by all who know him,

What misery can have wrought this change in

Valville?

Enter Servant—Gives LEONORA a Note and exit.

Leon. (tears open the note) I see, he comes—

Here, read it, Adelaide, I have not breath.

Adel: (reads) "Madam, I will, if possible,

Comply with your request.—VALVILLE."

So short!

Leon. O, it increases my astonishment!

But he will come—till then I wait with patience;

Stay with me, Adelaide—assist—console me.

Adel. I shall not leave you long—and, in my absence,

Claudine, who is both faithful and affectionate, May well beguile the time.

Leon. Since you must go,

Be speedy to return—I wish you present

At the approaching interview with Valville.

[Exit Adelaide.

Leon. (alone) My mind is quite a chaos, and my heart

Trembles and sinks with dreadful apprehensions—

May it not be that Liancourt has plann'd

Some scheme to disunite me and his brother,

And, that effected, gain me for himself.—

But, O! thy wicked plots shall not avail thee,

Thou treacherous kinsman!—Heavens! he's

here.

#### Enter LIANCOURT.

Lian. Your looks proclaim me an unwelcome guest—

But may I not request a moment's audience?

Is it too much for Liancourt to ask,

Whom once you loved so well?—is it too much

For you to grant to one who loves like me?

Leon. (scornfully) Sir, I have now no leisure to bestow. [Is going.

Lian. Proud woman! nor have I much time to spare;

I go this very moment '

To an appointment with your favourite Valville.

[She returns,

What!—there is magic in that name I see;
But mark, disdainful beauty, I foretel
The time will come, and shortly too, when Valville

Will be as scorn'd as he is now belov'd; And low as I am held in your esteem Valville will yet be lower.

Leon. Wretch!

Restrain I charge thee thy irreverent speech; Valville in every thing was born to triumph, Not only in my breast, Yer Liancourt, But in the esteem and love of all the world.

Why have you dar'd intrude where, well you know,

You are so little welcome?—I detest you now.

Still more than once (I blush to own) I lov'd

you:

And but to offer your congratulations

Upon my marriage with your noble brothes,

Never again dare to appear before me. [Exit.]

Inen. (alone) Your brother, said she?—then

I find the news

Has not, as yet, arrived to blast her hopes

And make my vengeance sure; yet Valville

saw her---

Saw her this very morning—well—
She cannot long remain in ignorance,
For various witnesses will blaze the truth.—
Valville has sent to me to ask a meeting,
And bid me name the place—which I have
done,

Where I may be assur'd of interruption.

Fate is now at work—I hope for me, As all I wish depends on Valville's ruin.

Exit. Scene closes.

Scene III.—Valville's Apartment—He is walking about in great Agitation, and exclaims—

O how time lingers with the miserable! 'He could not yet return.—

To have a dagger planted in my heart

By a friend's hand—at least I thought him

And oft have his deceitful lips profan'd The terms of friend and brother!

[He takes a paper from the table.

Here, too, is further subject for disquiet— Does she not say my honour is engaged?

Reads.

" I cannot understand your present

3

conduct—I will not accept of such a farewell—come to me immediately—your honour is bound, at least, to explain your behaviour to,

"Yours, most truly,

" LEONORA BEAUMONT."

(Val. repeats.) Leonora Beaumont!

A name my young, vain, and ill-judging heart,

Once fluttered at repeating;—how quickly did

that heart

Regain its freedom—yet she justly says,

My honour still is bound;—

Well—I will see her if stern fate allow;

And when she knows the truth, or I mistake,

Our parting will be easy.—Haughty woman!

How comes it she has not from lengthen'd intercourse

Caught some resemblance to her gentle friend? How happens it that friendship can subsist Between two minds in every thing so different? "Yours, most truly"—pity, perhaps, Now prompts her to be kind—she saw the sufferings

I tried in vain to hide—'tis pity and no more—
Nor shall that honour, which she calls upon,
Be deaf to its own laws;—they bid me not accept

Her proffer'd kindness, Which whether caus'd by pity, or by love, Is now not worth inquiring.

#### Enter Servant.

Well-what reply ?--

Have you seen Liancourt?

Ser. He bid me say,

That he will wait for you upon the ramparts.

Val. (snatching up his hat and sword) There is now one chance for my escape

From misery that I dread, much more than death. [Scene closes.

# Scene IV.—The Ramparts.—Enter Lian court and Valville, meeting:

- Lian. You see I have complied with your request.
  - Val. And can you meet me then with so much coolness?
  - Lian. With what design you gave the invita-
- I wait to be informed.
  - Val. Draw and defend yourself.
  - Lian. I am no coward—as the world well knows—
- I need not now fight, and I will not -

Val. You will not fight-

Lian. (with scorn) No, not with you.

Val. How, insult joined to meanness—I despise thee!—

But we are interrupted -

#### Enter some Officers.

Lian. (aside) 'Tis what I wish'd.

Ŷ

Offi, How's this—a quarrel!—between friends and brothers?

Val. He is nor friend nor brother.

Offi. Tell us what has happened?

Lian. (speaking fast) Why thus it is—
Valville has been deserted by his parents,
Exposed, a new-born infant, at our door,
My father bred him up—dying he told me so—
And wished, no doubt, the world should be informed.

Val. O, Liancourt, how much do you disgrace
The noble name you bear from such a sire.

Lian. Comrades in arms, to you I will appeal—How is it possible it could be meant
That Valville ever should be thought my brother;
When he has been excluded, as you know,
From the least share in my inheritance.

Val. My brother efficers, also to you

Let me appeal. His noble father's death

Happened so suddenly, that help, though near, Could not be brought in time to try to save him; Whilst I was on my knees with tears embracing His almost lifeless hand, to Liancourt he spoke, 'My son, surprised by death, I have no time To make the disposition that I wish—But'yet, still look on Valville as your brother.'—On this I started up, and flew to haster The expected succours, but on my return Found all was over. O my more than father! The ill-treatment I have suffered from thy son Shall ne'er obliterate the deep respect I owe thy memory—

[He walks from them with emotion.

My friends, excuse

The involuntary transport!

Tis now three months since cruel death deprived

Of my most generous patron, since which time
I have with pain observed in Liancourt
An alteration I could not account for.

Last night I questioned him, and he replied
In terms of scorn, reproached me with my birth,
As illegitimate, and therefore infamous!
Said that his father told him every circumstance
While I was absent, and in Baldwin's presence,
Who was the person that had found me first,
When by my parents, or from fear or shame,
I was exposed for adventitious charity.
A paper too he gave and bade me read it,
Then left me with these words, that now I knew
I had no longer any further claim
Or to his name or fortune.

Lian. I spoke the truth—Baldwin must witness it—

Val. Alas!—the truth I do not, dare not, question.

I have seen Baldwin—the poor, good, old man With tears unwillingly confirmed my fate;
He would have kept the fatal secret still——But I shall tire your patience;—let me add,
Though Liancourt has met me, he refuses

To give me satisfaction for his outrage:
How am I changed — am I not Valville still:
Lian. No, to that name you have no more a
right.
Val. Is it then, just heaven, the name alone
That gives a claim to honour? Thine indeed
Is noble—but when added to it
There stands a list of vices, among which
Are to be seen unfriendliness and perfidy,
Cold inhumanity and colder avarice.
Darest thou, Liancourt, to boast thy name,
Which as it nobler is, but more enjoins us
Not to disgrace it by unworthy actions-
Thy motive has not been—I know it has not—
To sacrifice to truth; but by my ruin,
You sought to gratify a mean revenge.
(To the Officers) Tell me, my brave companions-
answer freely,

Am I no longer worthy to be rank'd
With honourable characters? [They look down.
I read your answer in those downcast looks;

But yet I will presume I also see A generous mixture of concern.

Offi. We own your virtues—but there are hard laws—

Val. No more, my friends, too well I know those laws,

Made by blind prejudice, in barbarous ages—
And thus I own—and satisfy your scruples.

[Tears out his cockade.

Now then, I have but one hard trial more;.

That over, Providence, be thou my guide!

Grateful for favours past—of guilt unconscious,
I can implore thy aid, with humble confidence,
Though destitute of friends, of fame, and
fortune.

END OF ACT I.

#### ACT II. SCENE I.

LEONORA'S House. — Enter VALVILLE and Servant.

Serv. I shall inform my lady, sir.

Exit Servant.

Val. (taking a paper from his pocket) Let me again peruse this fatal scroll. [Reads.

" It is not the offspring of guilt that

now implores your protection; but may he never know his unhappy parents— Heaven preserve my child!—"

O words of dire import!—a mother's hand Seems to have traced unsteadily these lines: Yet where was then a mother's tenderness That thus could to eternal separation Doom her deserted child?—but Leonora comes—And with her Adelaide!—be firm, my heart,
For though severe, yet short will be the conflict.

Enter LEONORA and ADELAIDE.

Val. Madam, I have complied with your request,

Yet I must think, we might have both been spared

A second parting interview.

Leon. O, Valville!

Wherefore all this—why do you torture thus
A heart that well you know is wholly yours?
Say I have feign'd a momentary coldness,
Is that the reason of your present conduct?
Tell me your griefs—confide them to this bosom—
Nay, I will know—for have I not a right?—

[He turns from her.

And if to make that right the more undoubted,

This hand must first be given—take it, Valville—

[He again turns from her.

What, is it then refus'd?—ungrateful man!—
Are all your vows and prayers so soon forgotten?

Val. O no—it is not that I can forget

Those vows which once you listened to with kindness:

But if I heaitate—it is because
I am become unworthy to fulfil them;
I have no more—or name—or home—or fortune—
Deserted by my parents at my birth,
I owe my preservation to compassion,
Which what it could it gave—but in the world,
(With whom to be unfortunate is criminal)
I am beheld with horror and contempt.
This paper, madam, folded on my breast,
When I was found by Baldwin, will more fully
Explain my wretched story—read—and then—
Lor. (takes the paper, reads, lets it fall, and

Val. (with bitterness) It is what I foresaw and would have spared

and beard!

exclaims) O. Adelaide—what have I seen

To both of us this mortifying moment;

I see my presence but distresses you,

Madam—farewell.

Adel. (in great agitation) O, Valville!—go not yet.

Val. And wherefore should I stay?—behold your friend,

And pity her confusion and distress;

I go then—and for ever.

Exit.

Leon. For ever, did he say?

Adel. Shall I not call him back?

l.eon. I cannot suffer it-

Unfortunate discovery-cruel fate!

Adel. Ah, Leonora!-will you then refuse

To save from misery the man you love? .

Leon. How shall a feeble woman find the courage

To stem the torrent of a censuring world?-

Adel. And is the world—or by applause or

censure,

To interfere where conscience must decide?-

In those still, silent hours, which come to all, Will she not picture to you Valville's form
In terrifying colours?—lost—despairing—
A prey to shame and sorrow undeserv'd!
O, think on this, and pity, join'd to love,
Will more confirm you his.

Leon. May it not be some trial of my love— Can it indeed be so?

Adel. I dare not flatter you.

Leon. O, Adelaide—my softened heart allows
The force of your persuasions; but I fear
We cannot blameless listen to its dictates,
When prudence strongly argues against love.

Adel. Can we then blameless listen to those dictates

Which argue against mercy—which persuade us
That we may be unjust, without a crime—
Is Valville chang'd—what signifies a name?—
His truly noble heart, his mind, and person,
Boast the same graces still; and if the world,
Cold and unfeeling, yield him up to shame,

Will you increase the weight, who may remove it?

And but, because your lover is unhappy,

Break solemn vows, and pitiless desert him?

Leon. (aside) (Break solemn vows!—and may not vows be broken?—

If not, O Liancourt, thou art aveng'd)—
Here let us cease—my mind, perturb'd and sad,
Admits no ray of light that guides to comfort.—
Yet I will ask, to justify myself,
If you could find the courage to bestow
Your hand and fortune on a man deemed infamous?—

I cannot be deceiv'd—I see you could not.

Adel. O Heavens!—how falsely have you judged my thoughts.—

This heart would glory in the privilege
Of rescuing worth from undeserv'd oppression;
My fortune, were it tenfold what it is,
How could I use it to a better purpose?
And we would fly together to some clime,
Some happier clime, where prejudice usurps not

Dominion over mercy—reason—justice!— Excuse my warmth.

Leon. That warmth might raise suspicion, But well I know you ever were romantic.—
I go to write to Valville—Heaven knows
I pity him sincerely;—but I feel,
I neither can, nor will behold him more.

[Exit LEONORA.

Adel. (alone) Capricious—prejudiced—unjust—and thence,

Unhappy woman, she will not allow
Reason or love to plead in her own favour.—
Valville! since Leonora is unkind,
Why have you not another heart to deal with!—
Might I but be allow'd!—O dangerous thoughts!
Into what paths forbidden would you lead me—
Preserve me from them, Heaven, and keep my mind

Steady to friendship's awful obligations;
Still may my friend rely on my fidelity,—
Although I disapprove her changeful conduct:

Not all the esteem my heart must feel for Valville (Alas, another word I fear were juster)

Shall ever violate the sacred rights

A friend has over me.

## Enter CLAUDINE.

Clau. Madam, my lady begs you will excuse her,

She is not well, and wishes for repose.

Adel. Tell her, I'm much concerned—and will return

The moment that she wishes for my presence—And try, Claudine, your art to comfort her;

The cloud that for the present hangs o'er

Valville

Will be dispersed, and we may all be happy.

[Scene closes.

Scene II.—Valville's Apartment—He is sorting some Papers, some one knocks at the Door.

Val. Who's that?—Come in.

Enter BALDWIN.

Val. O, Baldwin, is it you?— In tears! poor good old man.

Bald. My dear young master,
These tears—they fall for you!—

Val. Baldwin, what Heaven wills

We must submit to; but that I can hope

My melancholy fate is not deserv'd,

Affords me consolation—and should you.

Bald. I brought a message to you from your brother—

From Liancourt, I mean—it wrung my heart Only to hear it, and my faltering tongue Refuses to repeat it.

Val. Courage, old friend,

I have no longer anything to fear—
What!—he desired me to quit his house;
But the request was needless—for I feel
I'm an intruder—and, without his bidding,
Was hastening my departure.
You see, I am preparing—take these papers,
And burn them instantly;—and for these others,
Deliver them, with care, to Leonora;
She will soon, and gladly too, destroy them;
O may there on the earth remain no vestige
Of the unhappy Valville.

Bald. Heaven forbid!—
Great miracles are often work'd by time—
May you live long—

Val. Let not mistaken zeal

Prompt you to form a wish that I should live.

Mistake me not, poor terrified old man,
I shall seek only honourable death.

Our army lies encamped without the city,
Thither I shall repair;—our foes approach,
And an engagement hourly is expected.—

When fighting for our country we expire,
Is it not glorious death?—death to be envied,
And to be sought for by a wretch like me!—
Believe me, Baldwin, every moment now
Brings to my mind a fresh degree of calmness—
One thought alone still clings around my heart,
And whilst I breathe will be the last to quit it.

[Some one knocks.

See who it is.

[BALDWIN opens the door.

[Enter a Servant, who gives Valville a note, and lays a bag on the table.

Serv. From Madame Beaumont, sir.

Val. (reads the note in a low and discomposed

tone)

"I cannot defend my conduct, nor can I change it; though we must meet no more, still think me your friend, and as such, receive the present I have sent you.

" L. B."

How!—insult upon insult!—patience, Heaven!— Take up the money, friend—

Serv. Sir, I was commanded to leave it here.

Val. Take it up, I say;

Return with it directly to your lady—

Tell her I have no time to write to her—

Tell her I say that she has greatly err'd—

And that she owes me nothing—there—begone.

[Exit Servant.

Why was I not more master of my temper?—
But could she think I would accept her gold?—
Where was her own high spirit when she thought

it?---

The journey I shall take is not a long one,
A small expense will bear me to the field,
And may I, Heaven, be fortunate when there!
But had I wanted money, honest Baldwin
Would not have scrupled to assist his friend!—
What, still in tears?—fie—have a better heart,
man.

Bald. O had my good old master liv'd, this sight

I ne'er should have beheld; to see you driven
An exile from the hospitable roof
Where once you were so cherish'd, so caress'd.
Methinks I now behold your helpless innocence
Imploring succour;—see your little hands
Grasping the arm extended to relieve you.
My master's new-born infant had that morning
Expired suddenly, and we agreed
You should be substituted in its place,
As sent from Heaven—the scheme was feasible,
There was an accidental likeness—I contriv'd
To make the exchange—nor caused the least
suspicion,

And he yet lives! resounded through the house.

O how your noble patron lov'd to trace
In your young features, marks of rising greatness:

And dwelt delighted on his future schemes
For you and for your then reputed brother;
How earnestly he wished to see completed
Your union with the beauteous Leonora—

Though I have sometimes thought her gentle friend,

Who was designed the bride of Liancourt, Had better suited you.

Val. (agitated) O you have raised a thought— Bald. Forgive me—for I meant not to disturb you.—

How have I caused this fearful agitation?

Val. O, Adelaide, how blest will that man be Who can obtain and merit thy affection?—

I never more, perhaps; but yet there's time, And long acquaintance sure may authorize A parting interview.—Baldwin, God bless you!—Remember my injunctions, and to Liancourt Say what you please—yet I could wish him told (But not by you) that though I am the scorn Of the hard-hearted world, I would not be What he is, to possess his rank and fortune.

[Exeunt both. Scene closes.

Scene III.—An Apartment in Adelaide's House.

## Enter ADELAIDE alone.

Adel. Now I begin to breathe!—how hardly did I

Conceal emotions difficult to hide,
And O, I find, impossible to conquer;
For I have tried—but tried, alas, in vain!—
Yet am I sure I have escaped suspicion
From love's all-piercing, all-suspicious eyes?
Could it to friendship only be imputed
The interest I took in Valville's wrongs?
Yet friendship surely gave pretence for sorrow;
Valville and I have been from childhood friends,
Our cares, our pleasures, and our sports the

While happy childhood lasted—and though soon Those moments, on swift pinions, take their flight, Yet their impression memory long retains;— Memory, that foe to peace, who, when the mind Would slumber o'er its woes, awakens us To painful, unavailing recollection.

Valville is now the lover of my friend—
Yet if I know my heart, it is not selfish.

May Leonora's love o'ercome her pride,
And may she make herself and Valville happy.

## Enter VALVILLE.

Val. Madam, I have presum'd once more to see you,

To ask excuse for my abrupt departure
When last we met; but to have longer staid
Had only more offended Leonora.

Adel. And is it then decided we must lose you?

Val. Bereft of all that renders life a blessing,
I feel existence as a painful burthen,
And go to join our army, with the hope
To lose, and not ingloriously, that life
Now of so little value.

Adel. O, Valville, is it for ourselves alone

That we should wish to live?—have you no friend?—

Alas, poor Leonora!

Val. Your generous heart, I see, is not asham'd
To show that it compassionates my sufferings.

Adel. Ah. would I could relieve what I de-

plore.—

But surely Leonora-

Val. Name her not.

She has no heart,—at least has none for me; She has restor'd my freedom, and dismissed me Like one who turns a beggar from their door; Far from regretting this, I feel reliev'd, As from a heavy burden borne too long; Flatter me then no more, my gentle friend.

Adel. I meant it not as flattery, be assur'd;
But what I hope myself I would encourage
You to hope also. Were you not too hasty?
Something should be allowed for the surprise.
Let me entreat you—see her once again.

Val. No;—'tis too late,—I cannot think as you do:

My ruin'd fortunes have increased my pride, And I was proud before. Madam, your friend Has much to answer for, to me and others; But I forgive her, and can wish her happy. O Adelaide!—I cannot bear to see Those precious tears,—'tis time that we should part.

Adieu then, and just heaven reward your virtues.

Adel. (with great emotion) O Valville stay

-for one short moment stay-You must not throw away a life so prized By-many,-think you have a friend in me Who will with friendship's tenderest concern Watch o'er your interests—O permit me— I own I may want firmness—I confess— To give you consolation I should be Myself more calm—alas! it is impossible!

Val. Gentlest of human beings! how you soothe

The perturbation of my troubled spirit,

And to my wounded mind those tears are balm.

O if I linger here I am undone—

Parewell, then, most beloved, most valued friend,

And equal to your merit be your happiness.

But may you soon forget you ever knew

One so unfortunate, so lost as Valville.

[Exit hastily.

Adel. (after a moment's pause) Then he is gone indeed—how happened it

That the long treasured secret of my bosom
Did not escape me? Valville, Valville,

Hast thou indeed not seen the fatal truth?

The downcast tearful eye, the blushing cheek,

The trembling voice,—how came it he observed not?

Yet more I dreaded thee, thou beating heart, Which, by its painful flutterings, seemed to long

To burst the bonds of rigorous confinement;
But wheresoe'er he goes 'twill follow him.

In constant progress; free, unfettered thought Shall still pursue his footsteps—nor can absence Have power to break a charm time's stronger

hand

Has formed indissoluble—
But can I bear to think his desperate courage
May lead him to destruction,—no, I will not,—
My timid soul expands to smiling hope,
And to just heaven I commit my Valville.
Watch over him, Almighty God of battles,
Crown him with never-fading wreaths of laurel;
And may the world forget his past misfortunes,
When their loud plaudits speak the present hero.

[Exit.

END OF ACT II.

## ACT III. SCENE I.

Outside the Walls of Orleans—a Camp is seen at a little distance—Enter VALVILLE in a common Soldier's Dress, his Sword drawn.

Val. Vainly I sought for death, it still escaped me,

Amidst the thickest of the fight, and where The battle raged in all its deathful fury.

O partial power, perhaps some life he ended (E'en at the very moment I invoked him)

Dear to his parents, to his wife and children,
Who now in fruitless prayers for his return

Try to beguile the torturing hours of absenceAlas! the aged sire, the tender wife,

The playful lisping children, ne'er again

Must hope to see the object of their prayer;

He lies a bleeding corse on yonder plain!

And I yet live, whom no one is concerned for,

No dear domestic ties make my life precious,

Or cause that dread of death, common to all

When dire misfortune has not murdered hope.

But hark, they sound retreat;—let me retire.

[Goes out.

Enter King, Officers, and Attendants.

King. Give orders that the wounded men
receive

All possible assistance; let the prisoners
Be kindly used; we war not with the vanquished.
But where is my preserver? is he found?

1st Offi. Beaufort has been despatched to seek

2d Offi. I saw him in the fight,—his noble air And coarse habiliments but ill agreed;

him out.

His courage seemed the effect of desperation,
That mocked at all resistance; when you, Sire,
Were nearly overpowered, he was seen
To force his way through the opposing crowd,
Seize on the uplifted arm that threatened death,
And with one stroke lay the assailant low.

Who can he be, this wonder-working hero?

King. Yonder he comes! (enter Valville and

Officer) welcome, my brave defender!
My lords, behold the man to whom this day
Your sovereign owes his liberty and life.

[The King gives VALVILLE his hand, who kneels and kisses it.

Rise, gallant youth, and let me be informed What is your name and what is your condition.

[VALVILLE walks from the King and appears in great agitation.—The King speaks low to his Officers.

Is he unknown of all?

Offi. When I approached him first he seemed surprised,

And followed me, I thought, with some reluc-

He spoke not to me,—but he often sigh'd;

And once exclaim'd, unconscious he was heard,

"Why do I still possess the wretched being

I so much wish'd to lose, and dread to keep."

King. He is unhappy then; but we will try

If we can ease his griefs. Approach, young hero,

Inform us who you are.

Val. Sire, you shall know

All that a hapless wretch knows of himself,

Who once was Valville, but who now is nothing.

Offi. Valville!—I thought I knew him; may it please you,

I can acquaint you further of his story.

King. Tell it me then apart.

[They withdraw.

Val. Why could I not have rested undiscovered?

I knew not 'twas the king that I assisted;
But thus had succour'd e'en his meanest subject,

If such had been the danger.

King. (coming forward) And are your parents' names unknown?

Val. They are,-

Though but till lately I thought otherwise.

Bred up to better hopes, the dreadful blow

That suddenly deprived me of all hope,

Seems to me thence a thousand times more

dreadful!-

The loss of fortune only I had borne;
But to become a nameless being,—sink so low
As to be deemed an outcast from society,
The general scorn, or at the best but pitied;
Of vice unconscious, yet be stigmatized
With the direbadge of infamy; it was too much—
To shake that off,—for who would live to bear it?
I rushed this day to battle,
Where a most lucky chance (it claims no merit)
Sheds a bright momentary gleam of sunshine
O'er my departing day; but not to me,
"Tis to all gracious heaven the praise is due.

King. And are not kings heaven's delegates on earth,

Bound to account for all their boasted power:
Young man, your story interests and affects me;
What are a monarch's people but his children,
Whom he protects and loves?—Till you can find
(And we shall aid the search) your long lost
parents,

The king will be your father.

Val. I want words

To speak my gratitude for so much goodness.

Allow me humbly to decline-

King. Your modesty

Is but another proof how much you merit;
Attend me to my tent; yet ere we go
Let me present you to your brave companions.
My lords, you will not scruple to salute
Your brother soldier;—that he is unhappy,
From the misfortunes or the faults of others,
Should but the more engage us to respect him.
He has no name,—but we will give him one—

My gallant friend, accept my offered hand; Let me persuade you back to life and hope; Fight always near my person, and henceforth Be called Soldat du Roy.

Offi. O brave young man, receive our warmest thanks,—

Accept of our best wishes.

King. What heaven this day has granted to our arms

Ensures the hopes of peace,—of welcome peace;
But, if as guardian to my people's rights,
Or as the just avenger of their wrongs,
Again the sword reluctantly be drawn,
I shall expect my soldier at my side. [Exeunt.

SCENE II.—Inside of a Church in the Town of Orleans.

Enter BALDWIN.

Bald. The armies, as I hear, have been engaged

E'er since the dawn of day; what numbers now Of hardy veterans and gallant youths
Lie cold and breathless on th' ensanguin'd plain.
O horrid war!—when will thy maw insatiate
Be glutted with thy bloody nouriture?—
When will the angel Peace descend from heaven,
And teach us all to live as brethren should?
Are not our forms the same? but oh, our hearts,
How much unlike!—and thence the earth is

With horrid tumults,—stain'd with human gore;
And different vices grow in different climes!—
Now where is my young master; I'm persuaded
That some good fortune is in store for him.
Hither I came, rather to pray for him
Than for myself,—heaven hear and grant my
prayer! [Goes to the altar and kneels.

Enter Valville, still in his Soldier's Dress.

Val. In these poor clothes I have escaped suspicion,

And passed unheeded through the crowded streets;

I gain'd permission for a little absence,

Having it much at heart to see old Baldwin.

This is the usual hour of his devotion;

Av. there upon his knees I see he is.

Praying perhaps for me,—the worthy creature!

[BALDWIN rises, and is passing by his Master, not recollecting him.

Val. How, my old friend, am I so soon forgotten?

Bald. Heavens!—yes—it is—my dear and honoured master;

But wherefore this disguise?

Val. I wish'd to pass unknown, and have succeeded;

But call it not disguise, for 'tis not certain

I have a right to wear a better dress.

How now, cheer up thy woful countenance;

I am become a favourite with the king,

Dost thou hear that, old Baldwin?

Bald. Heaven be praised!

Val. E'er this the town has heard the joyful news

Of glorious victory. Speed you to Adelaide, And tell her, by a lucky chance, I sav'd This day our monarch's life, who has rewarded With princely liberality the deed; She has a friendly heart,—she sympathised In my discress; and will rejoice to hear Of my good fortune.

Bald. Shall I not also go To Madame Beaumont?

Val. No, it will be needless,

For Adelaide can soon inform her friend.—

[He pauses a moment, and then exclaims, Baldwin—how solemn is the scene around me! A kind of horror creeps o'er all my senses! I am surrounded by the living monuments, Either by pride, or piety erected

To the lamented, and the honoured dead;

These, by the care of grateful successors,—

These all have found a home. Alas!

I have no parents, over whose remains,

With fond and filial piety, to raise

The monumental marble.—O my father!

If you exist,—alas! 'tis not for me!

If I have yet a mother,—why, just heaven,

Is her unhappy son a stranger to her?

[A woman, of a good air but meanly dressed, had followed VALVILLE into the church, listened attentively at a distance, whilst he talked to BALDWIN, but, on his apostrophe to his parents, had approached nearer, and, when he ceased speaking, caught the back of a chair, and exclaimed,]

Wom. O heavens!

Val. (supporting her) How feeble she appears to be.

Wom. My resolution fails me! Val. Where do you live?

I will conduct you home.

Wom. No,-let me die here,-

Here in your arms, my son.-

[Faints.

Val. Poor creature!-

Her senses seem bewildered,—help me, Baldwin,—

Assist me to support her;—she revives!— Madam be comforted,—say where you live, We will conduct you thither.

Wom. Alas! alas!

Val. Why do you gaze thus tenderly upon me? What means this frantic grief? are you unhappy? I also am unfortunate, yet then least so When I can offer to a fellow sufferer The smallest consolation.

Wom. O no longer,—

I can no longer bear the mighty conflict.

O forgive me,-my son,-my son.

Val. Do not my ears deceive me?

Wom. Can you pardon

Your dying mother?

Val. Gracious powers!

Wom. Behold indeed your mother!

Val. Thus on my knees let me embrace the blessing.

How the soft transport flutters round my heart, So new and so delightful. May I ask If yet my father lives?

Wom. He lives-but-

Val. Then gracious heaven has listened to my prayer;

These longing arms will now embrace a father:
I press my mother to my beating heart.
Those tears, those precious tears that I behold Flow from maternal tenderness,

And flow for me.

Are you not better now? can you not lead me Where I may find my other honoured parent?

Wom. Compose yourself, my son; a little strength

Seems to be lent me; and before we go

Let me explain what must appear surprising:

Noble and rich by birth,—the Count de Villeroy

Is my unhappy husband—and your father!

Val. The Count de Villeroy!—Baldwin, heard you that?

Now haste to Adelaide and tell her all.

Exit BALDWIN.

A worthy old domestic, whose gray hairs
I oft have view'd with almost filial reverence.
Let us begone,—for I am all impatience.

Countess. How just—how natural is that impatience!

But listen, whilst I shall unfold to you
What will abate much of your joy, my son;
Yet you must hear it, and prepare yourself,
For 'tis a tale of horror! Not long after
My marriage with your father, he engag'd
In a dispute that ended with a duel,
In which his adversary lost his life;
But that the laws of honour were observ'd,
And no advantage taken, be assur'd.
Unhappily, the friends of the deceas'd
Were powerful, and vow'd your father's ruin;
False witnesses appeared to swear against him;

He was accused, —imprisoned, —tried, —condemned,—

For murder! O when I recollect That dreadful period!—

Val. How!—a murderer!—

My father!-no,-it could not be.

Countess. I had foreseen your generous indignation,

And hasten to conclude my dismal story;—
That time with me was near when every help
Is wanted to support us through its terrors,
And by the agonies my mind endured
Upon the trial and the dreadful sentence,
The time was hastened, in a gloomy dungeon
You were born, and only for your sake
I gathered courage to support existence;
But when reflection came, I saw, alas!
That in a parent's ruin barbarous laws.
Involved a guiltless offspring, and I therefore
Dared every horror to preserve my child
From what appeared to me the worst of horrors.

I tore you from a father's fond embrace,
And with reluctant anguish, only felt
By sorrowing mothers, laid you at the door
Of a rich nobleman, whose many virtues
Were known to all—

Val. And Liancourt his name?

Countess. It was—he dwelt not distant from the prison;

I chose the time, when dusky evening falls,
And waited breathless at a little distance.
In a few moments I beheld a servant
Come from the house, he saw, and took you up,
Re-entered, and the door was closed upon him.
No language can describe, no tongue can tell
The feelings of that instant.—Almost lifeless,
I scarcely know how I regained the prison,
But in your father's presence found some comfort:—

With generous kindness he approved the deed:

And shortly after, by a friend's assistance,

Timely escaped from his unjust confinement.

I shared his flight, and many years we wandered, Subsisting on the sale of a few jewels, Which from our wreck of fortune had been saved.

Val. Alas! why was it not permitted me
To try to soothe your sorrows? ah, my mother;
Why, long e'er this, did you not own your son?

Countess. It is but lately that we came to Orleans, Where we have heard with pride and with delight The character of our beloved Valville;
But this it was that still the more resolved us Ne'er to disclose to him his real birth.
The dreadful sentence still remained in force:
How! tell our son he was a murderer's offspring?
Not e'en the weakness of a mother's fondness.
Could plead excuse for so much cruelty.

Val. O Prejudice! thou blind misleading power; We call ourselves enlightened, yet submit To be the willing slaves of barbarous customs. Yet I must wish that I had sooner known.

Countess. Screen'd from observance by the night's kind shelter,

We hither came, and ever since your father Has strictly lain concealed.
But I have sometimes ventured to indulge
The melancholy pleasure chance might give
To see you at a distance. Every voice
In Orleans dwelt delighted on the virtues
That graced the youngest son of Liancourt,
Whom, when at my request they pointed out,
Though twenty tedious years had intervened,
Yet the impression of your infant features
Had mocked the obliterating hand of time,
And the first glance proved to my conscious

Still the same features, but matured by age;
How glowed my heart when trembling hope
Gave way to joyful certainty! But now
The means of our subsistence were exhausted,
Nor seemed there one resource, or but that one
Which misery ever renders welcome to us;
The moment was approaching—yet I wished
To bless a mother's eye with one last look.

Entering this church I saw and knew you,

Though disguised; I was induced to follow—

Alas! how weak are human resolutions!

Val. Ah, do not blame yourself, in what has happened

I see and I adore the hand of heaven;—
But lead me instantly, where I may find
My injured, innocent, and honoured father.
I can—O joy supreme!—relieve your wants;
'Tis in my power—O height of human pride!—
To gain redress for a dear parent's wrongs.

[They go out, and scene closes.

Screen III.—The Apartment of the Count.—It is a wretched Chamber, where, on a tattered Cauch, he appears to be reposing.—After a few maments, he sizes slowly and comes forward.

Court. My feeble spinite

Seem wholly unrefreshed by this short slumber. Where stays the faithful partner of my woes? Dear unhappy woman-who can paint Thy various wretchedness?—O but for me Thou might'st have still been happy! The man whom every tie of love and honour Bound to preserve thy peace, he has destroyed it! Yet not the slightest murmur e'er escapes her. But ever has she stifled her own anguish. Lest, if I saw it, it should add to mine, And has unceasing strove, with mild attention, To mitigate my woes and yield me comfort. Who knows to be unhappy knows what power Kind consolation has to soothe the soul. Alas! what has not her maternal fondness Endured in this long absence from her son, A mother—and yet childless !—and O thou, My noble, virtuous son, who art forsaken In pity by thy parents, Heaven can witness Tis for thy good alone-Why else should we deny ourselves the rapture

Of clasping to our bosoms such a son!

O world, hard-hearted and misjudging world!

Surely a time will come when gloomy prejudice

Shall fly before the glorious light of reason.—

May it not be far distant when who hears

My melancholy story will exclaim,

Such were the prejudices of past times!

By sorrow and by sickness now worn out,

I feel the awful moment fast approaching,

When in the presence of a righteous judge

I must appear to render my account;

O may my sufferings have atoned my fault!

And O thou gracious father of the fatherless,

Bless and protect my son!—shield him from guilt!

And may his happiness exceed if possible His parents' miseries.

Where can my Constance stay? When she is absent

Methinks I feel a double share of sorrow—

I hear her footsteps, and my lightened heart

Rejoices at the sound.—Ye powers of mercy! What do I behold?

Enter VALVILLE, supporting the Countess. He throws himself at the Count's feet, exclaiming.

My father!

Count. (turning from his son) Constance, Constance!

Countess. (kneeling by Valville) Forgive me, Villeroy, 'twas not designed-

I was subdued—the weakness of a mother!

Count. (greatly agitated, and looking alternately at his wife and son) Rise, rise,

and help me to support-

It surely is—I cannot be deceived— Now take me wholly to yourselves, My wife-my child!

Val. And am I then in a fond father's arms? For ages of unhappiness this instant Were ample compensation.

Count. Ah, my son, we to ourselves were cruel, not to you—

Countess. He knows it all.

Val. Yes.—I have heard too much.—
But let us all forget what all have suffered;
High heaven is just,—vice for a while may triumph.

But innocence must conquer at the last.

By lucky chance (now ever to be blest)

I saved this day our monarch's life in battle,

Who grateful bid me name a recompense—

Now I have one to name, for at his feet

We will petition for another trial.

Count. How soothing, how revixing to my heart

These transports of your filial piety.

Surely e'er this we might have owned our son.

Val. Ah, wherefore did you not-but once again

Let me beseech you only to look forward.— The king ere this must be set out for Peris: But we will follow him, first having placed My mother with a kind and gentle friend, Who gladly will receive and cherish her.

Countess. Yes, we have heard my son, of Madame Beaumont.

Val. (with quickness) O let us now solely employ our thoughts

On your concerns my father—instantly

Depend on my return—but ere I go

Bestow upon your new-found happy son

A mutual blessing.— [kneels.

Count and Countess. Heaven bless my child!

Val. (rising) Now armed with a parental benediction

Is there an obstacle I shall not conquer?

[Scene closes.

END OF ACT III.

## ACT IV. SCENE I.

The Street before Madame BEAUMONT'S House.

## Enter LIANCOURT.

Lian. Did I once think, at Leonora's door
Twice the same day to be refused admittance?
But I must try again, or else the news
Of Valville's fortunate success will reach her,
And I shall be too late. [Knocks loudly.

Enter Porter.

Lian. Friend, I must see your lady. Por. Sir, 'tis impossible.

Enter CLAUDINE.

Tell me—for I will know—where is your lady?

Clau. (hesitating) Sir——

Lian. Come, come, I know you ever were

my friend,

And have I not endeavoured to be grateful?

Clau. I wish to serve you, sir, I own—but

now—

Lian. Tis now I more than ever want a friend, And you, Claudine, must be that friend to me. What say you to this ring?—I hope you like it, For I have kept it but to give it you.— There, my good girl, go—say to Leonora, That I must see her on important business.

Exit CLAUDINE.

There must be no expedient left untried;—
Falsehood, dissimulation seem no crimes
Used in the cause of love and Leonora.
Let her be mine, no matter on what terms,
And Valville, I despise thy rising fortunes:—
What are the glittering honours kings can give
Compared to joys I hope with Leonora?—

O had he not deprived me of her love,

Valville might still have shar'd my name and

fortune.

#### Enter CLAUDINE.

Clau. My lady, sir, will see you.

Lian. Now come to my assistance every art

Of soft persuasive love—teach me to bend

Her angry sullen spirit to my purpose.

[Exeunt both.

## Re-enter CLAUDINE.

Class. It is as I suspected—Liancourt,

Now Valville is dismiss'd, hopes to succeed;

And if my lady is not strangely alter'd,

He will not hope in vain—for I am sure

He was a favourite once, and people say

Old love is soon reviv'd; but I must now

Forbid all interruption—so he order'd—

And he has well deserv'd I should obey him.

[Scene closes.

# Scene changes to Leonoba's Apartment.— Leonoba and Liancourt.

Lian. Consider well—'tis the decisive mement; Resolve, and instantly, to be my bride, Or else this sword shall lay me at your feet, The expiring victim of your cruelty.

Leon. You are too hasty.

Lian. Too hasty-no-

Reflect that every moment but increases
The prying observations of the world,
Who call you still attached to Valville,
As meaning still to marry him.

Leon. Good heavens!

And who dares thus accuse me?

Lian. But too many-

Then hasten to disprove their base suggestions.

Leen. Sure we may wait a little.

Lian: O to what purpose should we wait,
my love?—

Think of my sufferings past—think what you owe me

For all the torments you have made me feel.——.
Can Leonora Beaumont be ungenerous?

Leon. Well, then, I must not think on what I promise—

But still remember—all must be a secret.

Lian. Yes, it shall secret be, as night and darkness.—

My soul, to thee devoted, swells exulting In contemplation of the glorious triumph; And now I fly to make the preparations.

[Exit LIANCOURT.

Leon. (alone) Thus it seems fixed that I must wed this man—

Fear of his threaten'd violence compelled me
To promise him what now I hate to think of;
And yet I lov'd him once—nay, like him now,
Though not as well as Valville—O my heart,
My coward heart, already dost thou waver;
Ah, wherefore didst thou leave me, Liancourt,

My thoughts are not thy friends?—Ha! Adelaide!—

What brings her hither?

Enter ADELAIDE and CLAUDINE

Leon. With such a smiling countenance I see you,

Surely you bring good news.

Adel. I do, indeed!-

Valville-our generous, our heroic Valville!-

Leon. Heavens!—what of him?—speak—I am in torture.

Adel. This day to him has given immortal

To him this day our good and gracious sovereign Owes liberty and life, and has rewarded, With princely liberality, the deed.—

His parents, too, are found—his birth is noble.

Leon. O had this news arrived a moment later, I had been lost.

Adel. Ah, happy Leonora,

Now prepare yourself;—for soon you will behold

Valville, with all his honours, at your feet.

Leon. Happy!—alas, you little can imagine
What I had purposed; but it is not done,
And I have yet the power to recede.—
Hasten, Claudine, and give the strictest orders,
When Liancourt returns, not to admit him.

#### Enter LIANCOURT.

Lian. Madam, those orders will be given too late,

Behold the man you interdict your presence;—

O wherefore, cruel woman, are you chang'd?—

Leon. I am not bound to give my reasons, sir; But if I'm satisfied, be you content.

Lian. Who binds a victim on the rack, and hopes

That he will be content?—no—you shall tell me Those reasons you are satisfied to know; By Heaven, I'll know them too. Madam, you seem surpris'd, but when you hear—
Leon. Liancourt, dare not say another word.
Lian. Madam, your orders are again in vain;
You rais'd the storm, and must abide its fury.
What! can you deem me made of such dull clay
Never to turn when I am trampled on,
But bear, without reproach, your cruelty.
Did you not send me to prepare the priest?
Leon. Heed him not, Adelaide; he is distracted—

You know to Valville I have given my vows.

Adel. Yes, I know that—but yet am much surpris'd.

Lian. O cruel Leonora, who so well

Know your own power, why drive thus to despair

Your faithful Liancourt;—he will not live—

He cannot live—unless he lives for you;

Even Adelaide would own I merit pity,

Were she acquainted—

Leon. No, sir, you're deceived—
For Adelaide is Valville's friend, and therefore—

Lian. I know what you would say—my eyes are opened—

And can you, Madam, then resolve to brave
The censures of the world?—when scorn'd of some,
And by the rest blam'd—or, at best, but pitied;
How, as the partner of disgrace and ruin,
Will you support existence?—O let me
Save you from such a fate;—this hand I quit not
Till at the altar, where the priest expects us,
You make it mine, before attesting Heaven—
Nay—struggle not.

Leon. Stand off—and now hear me—Yes, you were right to ask—how scorn'd of some, And by the rest blam'd—or, at best, but pitied, I should find courage to support existence?—But Valville, rich and noble, and the favourite Of a great king, whose life he has preserv'd, Renders his bride, to an applauding world, The object of their envy—not their scorn.

Lian. Then she has heard the news—I'm all confusion—

- O cursed chance!—but noble did she say?
- (To Adelaide) Madam, can you explain to me that word?
  - Adel. Yes, Liancourt, I can—the Count de Villeroy
- Glories in owning Valville for his son.
  - Lian. (with violence) O heavens and earth!—
    what Count de Villeroy?
  - Adel. That I know not—but why this frightful vehemence?—
- Baldwin was present when he met his mother,
- But did not hear the cause of the concealment.
  - Lian. Yes, it must be the same—kind Fate,
    I thank thee!—
- The time—the place—each circumstance confirms it.—
- Have you not heard the cause of the conceal-
- Then I will tell you—poor unhappy Valville, Even thy rival is inclined to pity thee.
  - Adel, What can he mean?

Leon. O he but trifles with us; We will not stay with him to be insulted.

[Is going.

Lian. Nay, madam, fly me not; but rest a moment,

That I may offer my congratulations:

I wish you joy, sincerely, on your charity.

Seldom the poor and infamous find friends;

But Valville, though he prove to be the son

Of one condemned for *murder*, may be envied,

Possess'd of Leanora's hand and fortune.

Adel. O, Liancourt, explain yourself, I charge you—

Pity the agonies your speech has caused.

Lian. I thought I had spoken plainly, for I meant not

To keep you in suspense, be well assured.—
'Tis twenty years ago—the age of Valville—
That at Cambray, where then my father lived,
This Count de Villeroy was tried for murder;

He was condemned—would have been executed; But he escaped from prison;—in effigy The sentence was performed, and his estates Were all confiscated.

Living or dead, he cannot be call'd noble.

And Valville, therefore—aye, and Valville's wife—

Must be included in the general ruin.

[ADELAIDE faints.

Leon. (supporting her) Help! quick, Claudine—see, wretch, what you have done!

Adel. (recovering) I'm sorry—to have caused you—such disturbance;

The violence of Liancourt—so frightened me— But I am better now—and will retire——

Claudine, your arm-

Leon. Let me attend you.

Adel. Indeed, you shall not—I am quite recover'd—

Claudine will kindly lend me her assistance.

[Exit Adelaide, leaning on CLAUDINE.

Lian. Now, charming Leonora, I may hope You will be wholly mine.

Leon. Hast thou not told a falsehood?—come, confess.

Lian. It is the truth—I swear, by Heaven and thee—

Leon. Still I must doubt.

Lian. Then prove my words.

Leon. And how?

Lian. The venerable Constans is your neighbour;

He sat upon the trial as a judge.

Leon. Who waits? (Enter a Servant.) Go to
Lord Constans, and demand of him
If at Cambray, now twenty years ago,

A Count de Villeroy was tried for murder.

Exit Servant.

Lian. You will be soon convinced I speak the truth.

Leon. O I have yet a moment still to think thee A false calumniator.

Lian. 'Tis not that

Gives such delight—it is your hopes to find Valville the hero that your love-sick fancy Joys to behold him.

Leon. Let it be so then-

You have guess'd right my thoughts -I glory in them-

And wherefore dare you, Liancourt, attempt
To change those thoughts—who have from him
receiv'd

A thousand favours.

Lian. And does not Valville owe-

Leon. Nothing to you—'twas all your father's bounty—

With whom your pardon he has often pleaded.

Ungrateful Liancourt!

Lian. All mere invective— But see, your messenger.

Enter Servant.

Leon. Well-speak-be quick-

Ser. Madam, there was a Count de Villeroy Tried at Cambray, now twenty years ago, But he escaped from prison—

Leon. Enough—begone—

[Exit Servant. She walks about in great disorder.

Lian. Well, madam—now—is Valville yet a

And may not Liancourt presume to hope-

Leon. In thy insulting eyes I read thy triumph;
But know, audacious man, 'tis not secure—
To punish thee I will destroy myself—
And give my hand and fortune to thy rival.
Valville shall triumph over Liancourt,
As far as it depends on Leonora. [Exit.

Lian. (alone) It is impossible—surely it is—
That she can execute what she has threaten'd—
Fool that I was to leave her for a moment;
But since I find persuasion is in vain,
Force must be tried; some trusty friends I have,
Who will not hesitate to do my bidding;
They shall be sought for; and if Valville's father

I could discover—that too might be well—

The laws are still in force against his life.

[Exit.

Scene II.—An Apartment in Adelaide's House—Valville, wrapt in a long Cloak, stands looking at a Picture.

Val. O boastful art! vainly thou hast essayed

To paint my charming friend—all thou couldst

do

Was to portray a face divinely fair, But the celestial softness of her eye No human art can ever hope to copy.

### Enter ADELAIDE.

Adel. Sure I should know that voice—how!—
Valville?

Val. Have I too much disturbed you?

Adel. Heed it not,

'Twas but a short surprize.

Val. O Adelaide,

Low at your feet behold your humbled friend;

Though when despised by all—a nameless being—

He found your generous heart not shut against him;

Yet who can blame you, should you now disdain

All converse with the offspring of a murderer?

Adel. Yes, I have heard the dreadful history.

Yet think me still your friend; would I could say

The same of Leonora—she, I fear,

For ever now has closed her heart against you.

Val. Then name her not—I feel too sensibly She ne'er can make me happy.—O Adelaide,

Those sighs, those tears, my miseries have caused you,

How shall I ere repay-if grateful friendship,

If an esteem heightened to adoration,

Nay, more,—I fain would speak—but my full

heart [He pauses, then recovering himself.

Since then the dreadful news has reached your

ears,

And you yet deem me worthy of your friendship,
I will acknowledge that I hither came
To ask your kind assistance, to solicit
Your generous protection for my mother.
My father and myself must seek the king;
During our absence, which may not be long,
Will you receive her?

Adel. O most willingly. Hasten and bring her.

Val. She is like the ruin

Of some fair temple that has been destroyed

By the rude hands of cruel enemies

Rather than by the ravages of time;

To merit bowed beneath affliction's stroke

I need not bid my Adelaide be kind;

But dread her gentle sympathising heart

Will feel too much for sorrows not its own.

I go then to conduct my mother hither.

[Is going, meets CLAUDINE.

#### Enter CLAUDINE.

Clau. How I rejoice, sir, that I find you here. I bring a message to you from my lady;
She says she is concerned for what is past,
But for the future you shall have no cause
To be dissatisfied, for she is ready
To ratify her vows, and all her fortune,
And all her powerful friends shall be employed.
To assist your parents, whom already she
Considers as her own.—

Has suffered her affection to return—

Val. Madam, 'tis to you I bring my mother,

But Leonora— [checking himself.\*

Say, Claudine, I am wholly occupied

With what concerns my parents, and that every thing

Adel. (in a faint voice) Since Leonora

Depends on our reception from the king,

[Exit Valville.

Clau. Madam, you seem not well.

Adel. 'Tis true, Claudiue;
But I shall soon be better—'tis not worth
The least attention; say to Leonora
I go for a few days to see my friend
The abbess of the Ursulines, and there
Shall pray to heaven for her and Valville's
welfare.

[Exit CLAUDINE.

And now then to perform an awful purpose,
Which long my anxious mind has dwelt upon,
With melancholy pleasure; my weak heart
Is little suited to a bustling world,
A convent's gloom appears congenial to it,
And I with joy shall hail its kindred horrors.
Alas! I find I have deceived myself:
I feel I could not be a constant witness
To the exulting joys of Leonora.
Yet O how much I fear for Valville's peace,
Who to be happy must indeed be blind.

From various evils that I dread to see

My coward heart seeks refuge in retirement;

The preparations quickly can be made:—

Those riches I so often have despised

Will now assist me tc complete my purpose.

How often has my friend, the abbess,

With strong urged arguments essayed to win me,

I therefore have no doubt of being welcome.

And thither too I may conduct the Countess;

She will assist me through the sacred rites,

Which, e'er her son can possibly return,

I hope will be completed.—Swiftly pass,

Ye moments of the dark and dreary night,

O bring to-morrow's sun, whose beams shall

witness

Those vows which will devote me to my God! .

[Scene closes

END OF ACT IV.

## ACT V. SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Convent—Enter the Countess, followed by Adelaide, who is richly dressed for the ensuing Ceremony.

Countess. Ah, my young friend, have you then well considered

Your present purpose?

Adel. Madam, I have.

Countess. 'Tis strange!-

So young—so fair—so blest with fortune's gifts.

Has then the world no claim upon your heart?

Adel. Indeed, it has not, if I know that

Countess. But why thus suddenly devote yourself

To gloomy solitude?—'tis only in the world

An active virtuous mind should seek for happiness;

And trust me there are many happy in it.

I know too well, that, in our course through life,

The paths are strewed with weeds as well as flowers—

But is the convent's path exempt from these?— Envy's fell sting oft mingles with devotion; Joys unattainable are often sigh'd for,

"And injured Heaven has only half our prayers."

Adel. Madam, 'tis not a sudden resolution;
I oft have ponder'd it from weighty reasons—
And sometime hence—should you still wish to

You shall be told them;—for the present spare

know.

And through the approaching awful ceremonies

Deign to assist my weak, though willing spirit;

I would they were begun—— [She sighs deeply.

Countess. And whence that sigh?

Adel. 'Twas but a vain and momentary struggle;—

There are some thoughts that will intrude, contending,

Not yet to be dismiss'd.—Ah, wherefore, madam,

Do you thus gaze on me with tearful eyes,

As if I were an object of compassion?—

Do I not rather merit envy from you?-

What is the world to those whom disappointment

Has early taught to scorn it's vain allurements?— My little story now may soon be told;

She shun'd the world—she sought her God-

and—died!

O were my purpos'd sacrifice completed;

I have but one wish more.

Countess. And what is that?

Adel. To find an early tomb!

Countess. Now, my fair friend, you have incurr'd my censure

Beyond what I imagin'd possible.

Who does not value life is most ungrateful;

And not to wish for it but owns we want
The will to use it in the cause of virtue.
O listen to me, loveliest Adelaide,
Take yet more time to weigh your resolution;
Valville must soon return—how will he grieve
To find you lost to him and Leonora.

Adel. (with impatience) Ah, madam, madam, every word you speak

But more confirms me in that resolution;
Why are the rites not instantly begun?—
Whence all this tedious needless preparation,
Which keeps my soul still sickening in suspense?
But hark! the convent's bell—O welcome signal
Of future peace to my now tortur'd mind!—
Come, madam, come, attend me to the altar;
There you shall see with what unfeigned delight
I enter on that state I long have sigh'd for.

Exeunt both.

Scene II .- The Church .- The principal Altar

magnificently decorated for the Ceremony—Solemn Music is played by a large Band of Musicians, on various Instruments—A Procession of Priests in their Habits of Ceremony—Of Nuns and Novices.—Adelaide appears, attended by the Countess—She goes through the various Ceremonies, and then retires to put on the Novice's Habit—During her Absence, the following Hymn is sung:—

I.

From a tempting world retir'd,
See approach Religion's child,
By a pious zeal inspired;
See, she comes, with aspect mild.

CHORUS.

" Angels ever bright and fair," Take, O take her to your care.

II.

Descend from Heaven, glorious power,
And thy prostrate suppliant aid,
Support her through this awful hour,
It is thy call she has obey'd.

#### CHORUS.

" Angels ever bright and fair," Take, O take her to your care.

ADELAIDE re-enters—Crosses the Stage in Procession, dressed as a Novice—She kneels before the Bishop.—At that Moment, an Officer appears at the Church-Door, and cries, with a loud Voice,

Give over instantly your pious rites, Behold the monarch's order.

Adel. Gracious heavens!

Abbess. Sir, we obey the orders of our king. Let every one retire—please you attend me, Where I may further learn about this business.

[All go out but Adelaide and the Countess.

Adel. O whence this cruel fatal interruption?

Countess. Be comforted, my love—the sacrifice

You seem so earnest for is but delay'd. Some other time, if still you persevere, It may be solemniz'd.

Adel. 'Tis so surprising!

That any one I know can have discover'd

What till last night lay buried in my bosom;

Had Valville known it—but that could not be—

And say he had—his Leonora now

Claims all his thoughts; nor would she interfere.

Her preparations for approaching happiness

Leave her no time to time to think of Adelaide.

Countess. Oh may it be a happy interruption,

And then kind Heaven has listen'd to my

prayers.

Adel. Ah, Madam, well I know that generous prayer Was meant in kindness, but you little guess—
Let me retire, while I have strength remaining.

[Is going, with the Countess; they are met by Leonora.

O Heavens!—what persecution!—Leonora!—

Leon. What have I heard, and what do I be-

Unfriendly Adelaide!

Adel. How shall I answer her?

Leon. To hide yourself from an admiring world!

O be assured neither myself nor Valville Will ever suffer it.

Adel. O torture!

Leon. Nay, you shall answer me.

Adel. That you are very kind I will confess;
But in this instance I must be allowed
To think and act entirely for myself;
All opposition will be vain and cruel,
And therefore cease—in pity cease the contest.

[To the Countess.

Madam, let me present you to my friend; This, Leonora, is your Valville's mother; And this the lady, madam, who was chosen For your son's bride by his reputed father.

Leon. Thus introduced, why should I not declare

That my best hope is soon to boast a right, A nearer, dearer right to offer you All my best services.

Enter a Servant, who whispers LEONORA.

Not tell their names!

Say I will come—excuse me for a moment.

Adel. Let us now retire.

[Leonora goes towards the great door of the church, at which, on its opening, a carriage appears—Liancourt meets Leonora at the door and catches hold of her, she disengages herself and re-enters the church, he following her; the Countess and Adr-

LAIDE stand looking on in the utmost astonishment.

Leon. Follow me not—nor with your horrid violence

Dare to profane these peaceful hallowed walls;

O Adelaide! rejoice at my escape,

By a pretence the villain would have seized me;

Fear gave me strength, or else I had been lost.

Lian. (to ADELAIDE) Madam, your situation I respect.

And meant not, be assured, to have disturbed you;

This violent woman forced me to pursue her.

I would elsewhere have spoken, but she staid not

To hear the whole of what I had to say;

Why thus on me does she revenge the cause

Of her lost lover, and am I to blame

Because the king will not forgive his father?

[All start.

Countess. O heavens! then all is over, and our hopes,

Our short lived hopes, are vanished like a dream!

Adel. Madam, compose yourself—

[Her voice fails her.

A side Door is thrown open, and enter Baldwin.

Bald. Joy to all here!

If I mistake not, this must be the Countess.

Madam, your lord commissioned me to bring you

His joyful gratulations-

Countess. Then he has found mercy?

Bald. Yes, that he has—mercy and justice too;

The gracious king has fully pardoned him,

Restored his forfeited estates, and ordered

Another trial, that he may have vengeance.

Countess. O far be any vengeance from our thoughts.

Valville-my son!-'tis chiefly for thy sake

Thy mother now rejoices.

Adel. Madam, let me-

[Her voice fails her, but she takes a hand of the COUNTESS and kisses it.

Leon. (looks round and sees LIANCOURT, who stands like one stupefied.) What! are you still here? mean you to stay

To see the man you have so greatly injured?

Lian. I feel this is indeed no place for me-

But I may still find time and place for vengeance!

[Exit.

UNTESS).

- Bald. I hear their horses (to the Countess).

  Madam, be prepared.
- Adel. Tis the last trial, heaven support me through it.
- [A great noise is heard, and a clashing of swords at the church-door— Enter the Count and Valville, driving before them Liancourt and one of the ruffians, whom they had disarmed.

Lian. Hold, friends, 'tis now too late.

Val. Coward! it is my life you should attack, And not my father's.

Countess. (reclining on Adelaide) O protect my son, my husband!

[VALVILLE and the Count throw down their swords and embrace the Countess.

Count. My wife!

Val. My mother!

(He observes the dress of ADELAIDE and exclaims aside to his mother,

Great God of heaven and earth! came it too late?

Countess. No; it arrived in time.

Val. Now, Liancourt, we meet on equal terms,—

Take up your sword, and I will take up mine;
Unless you choose that we should live like
friends,

And here I swear that all shall be forgotten:
Who shuts his heart to a repentant brother
Knows not that noblest pleasure—to forgive.

Say but it is your wish, and we are friends.

Lian. Friends, Valville,—no, impossible?

I own myself defeated—Leonora

Must now be yours—for whom I dared so

much.

And who once promised but to live for me.

Yes, proud, deceitful, and ungrateful woman!

Thy broken vows to me must still reproach thee,
And in thy lover's arms will mar thy happiness.

Short too will be thy specious favourite's triumph;

Valville, in wedding thee, will but embrace

A bosom torment; soon the various ills,

Ever attendant on ill-sorted unions,

Shall terribly avenge me on you both. [Exit.

Leon. Think not on what a madman wildly

raves---

His words were words of spite and desperation.

Dear Valville, let me be among your friends

The first to wish you joy.

Adel. O let me too congratulate you all.

Thrice happy, enviable Leonora!

The world throws all its treasures at your feet, Whilst the poor Adelaide has but to wish That she may quit it soon.

Leon. No, Adelaide, you must not, shall not leave us;

Henceforth we live together, all one family.
With me and Valville,
You and the Count and Countess must reside.

I'm sorry now our marriage was delayed, For to the generous mind it is so pleasant Conferring obligations where we love.

Val. (who has appeared to listen with great impatience) Am I not in a dream? do I hear right?

But, madam, in reply to what you offer—

[To LEONORA.

Adel. (exerting herself) O Valville, hear me calmly for a moment!

'Tis for the last time I request a hearing.

As my first wish has ever been your happiness,

So let me be absolved by that just judge
To whom I am determined to devote
My future days—nay, hear me out—
My friend is now convinced of your desert,
May you live long and happily together,
And sometimes think, though without pain, on
one

Who now bids you adieu—for ever!

Leon. Valville—we will not sufferher to leave us.

Val. No, madam; I will sooner part with

life!—

To LEONORA) Unfeeling woman! wherefore are you here—

Were you not satisfied to torture me,
But you must also persecute
My gentle Adelaide. O turn your eyes,
Most generous of women, see that Valville
Who (when by an ill-judging world deserted)
Found favour in your sight,—behold him now
Your noble mind's adorer.

Leon. How, Valville!

Val. I own I long have been the shameful slave

Of Leonora; neither can your friendship Palliate her behaviour.

Adel. Ah Valville!

Val. Yes, I can well explain that speaking look—

But all is now decided; Leonora

Must have despised a heart she so ill-treated,
Her chains she rendered insupportable,
And I have thrown them off. I now repeat
I was that lady's slave; I am, O Adelaide,
Enchanting, noble creature, at your feet;
The grateful Valville sues to be accepted,
Not as your friend alone, but as your lover,
Who here before high heaven devotes himself
For ever yours.

Leon. O misery supreme!

And is it come to this—despised—rejected—

Now whither can I fly to hide my shame?
Yet to the truth let me bear painful witness;
I own my fate deserved. Valville is free,
My conduct has released him from all promise.
To broken vows succeeded vows unjust;
For first to Liancourt I pledged my faith.
And had no right to give it to another;
The violence of passion and of prejudice
Has been my ruin.

[Exit Leonora.

Adel. Alas! I fear some dreadful consequence.

Val. Be not alarmed, my love, for she will soon

Be reconciled to Liancourt

I was not ignorant of her perjuries.

But let us turn our eyes to fairer prospects,

This hand, though sued for, is not yet bestow'd.

Adel. How can I then so soon forget my friendship

And all my promises to Leonora?

Val. I will respect your delicate objections.

But let me here explain before my parents
Our different situations; e'en from infancy
We loved each other, and I can say this,
Though in obedience to another's will,
And also thinking Adelaide engaged,
I paid to Leonora my first homage;
I own my eyes gere dazzled with her charms,
And once I thought I loved her—but, though
dazzled,

I was not blinded, and her reign was short;

My Adelaide resumed her gentle empire,

And oft my heart rose fluttering to my lips,

Longing to dictate to them all the truth;

Latterly too—but then my wretched fortunes

Checked my bold hopes—and am I not rewarded?

Adel. Valville, who can reward you?

Countess. His constant duty to his former parents,

The transports of his filial piety

Shown to those found in misery and disgrace,

Sweet Adelaide, you only can reward;

I had imagined he was not indifferent

To what concerned his friend, and therefore
sent

A speedy messenger, who might inform him
Of the rash resolution she had taken;
And all has happened as I could have wished.
I see a bashful yielding in her eyes,
And sparkling hope is lighted up in Valville's.

Adel. Away then with false shame—Valville, I'm yours.

Count (to the audience) Behold the sad effects of uncurbed passions!

How humbled now the haughty Leonora;

And in the unhappy Liancourt we see

The disappointments he has well deserved,

Who by ungenerous means would gain his purpose.

O surely if we deviate from the paths
Of simple rectitude, sorrow and shame
Will be our portion;—join, my dearest Constance,
Join with me in my grateful thanks to heaven,

For having deemed the errors of my youth Sufficiently atoned, and given this moment Richly to overpay me all my sufferings.

Scene closes.

THE END.